WILLS OF BRISTOL

1786-1901

WILLS *of* BRISTOL

by

ROGER TILL

This story of the W. D. & H. O. Wills Branch of The Imperial Tobacco Company (of Great Britain and Ireland), Ltd., was originally presented in Wills's Magazine in three instalments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ERRATA

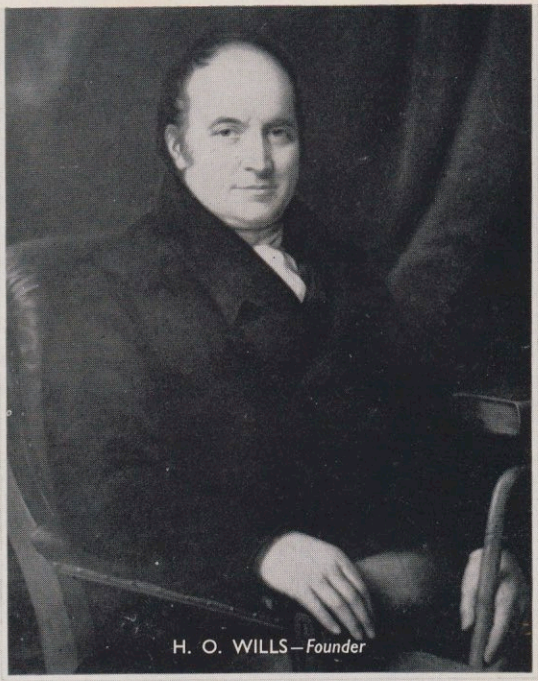
Pages		
19	line 16	The " electric apparatus " mentioned was not a telephone but a Wheatstone telegraphic apparatus. The first business installation of a telephone in Bristol was made for Messrs. Wm. Butler & Sons, in 1879. The first telephone circuit in Britain was laid in 1878.
43	Family Tree	The name of Mr. Hugh C. Wills (1884-) should appear between those of Mr. F. O. Wills and Mr. B. B. Wills.
44	line 22	Delete " Two years later ". The year in which the firm introduced their first pictorial stiffener was probably 1887.
48	line 14	Read " L.M.S." not " G.W.R.".
49	line 5 line 19	Read " second cousins " not " nephews ". Read " constituency " not " ward ".
56	line 4	Read " Powe " not " Powell ".
59	line 13	Read " Virginia Cavendish Works " not " Victoria Cavendish Works ".
	line 14	Read " 1887 " not " 1897 "

ERRATA

On page 49, line 5, read " second cousins ", not " nephews ", and line 19, " constituency ", not " ward ".

On page 59, line 13, read " Virginia Cavendish Works ", not " Victoria Cavendish Works ".

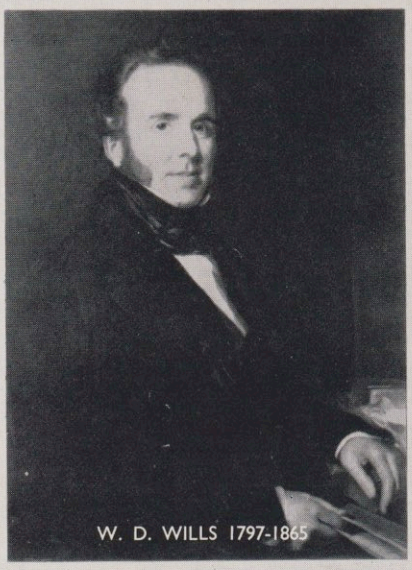
1761



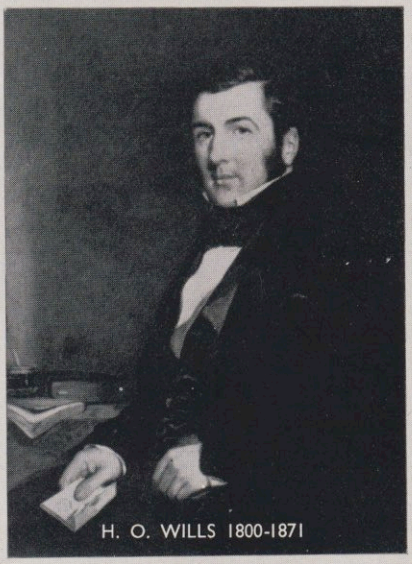
H. O. WILLS—*Founder*

1826

THE FOUNDER OF THE FIRM AND HIS SONS



W. D. WILLS 1797-1865



H. O. WILLS 1800-1871

CHAPTER ONE

THE YOUNG MAN FROM SALISBURY

FROM his uncomfortable position on top of the stage-coach from Salisbury a young man sat watching the lights of Bristol draw nearer and nearer. On that dusky evening in 1786 he was probably thinking less about the state of trade than about the state of the roads. During a five-miles-an-hour journey in one of these vehicles it was not easy for a passenger, bespattered with mud and shaken at every twist and turn of the road, to meditate calmly on public affairs. The most important consideration was not whether the country was going to the dogs but whether the coach was going into the ditch.

True, the young man from Salisbury was not coming to Bristol merely for pleasure. He was twenty-five, and had a living to earn. His father, though himself a watchmaker, had talked to him about the tobacco trade. It was certainly a possibility to bear in mind. Though Britain had lost her colonies to America, the war had been over these three years and commercially there was no bad feeling between the two countries.

But these thoughts gradually receded from the young man's mind as the coach reached Bristol and rattled down Temple Street into Bath Street. His immediate interest was held by objects that were soon to become familiar to him—the leaning tower of Temple, the spires of St. Nicholas and half a dozen other churches, the masts of ships moored in the river.

Soon the coach had turned into Corn Street, passed the Council House and pulled up before the lighted windows of the Bush Tavern. The young man climbed stiffly down from his perch and called the ostler to carry his baggage into the inn. That baggage bore the name Henry Overton Wills.

We do not know very much about the early life of the first H. O. Wills, either before or after his coming to Bristol. We know that he joined Samuel Watkins as a partner in a tobacco-manufacturing business at 73 Castle Street, and that the firm became Wills, Watkins & Co. We know that in 1789 Mr. Watkins retired and the firm became known as Wills & Co. We also know that by the end of the same year the two other partners—John Collins and Aaron Northcote—had retired and that the firm became H. O. Wills & Co.

We have only to glance at a street directory of the period to note—as H. O. Wills must have been quick to note—the proximity of several other tobacco businesses, for most of the fourteen firms in the city were in Old Market Street,

Castle Street, Peter Street and Mary-le-Port Street, which led from one to another and formed virtually a straight line.

By our standards the social conditions of the time were not ideal. A local newspaper complained that pigs and goats were allowed to wander about the streets with impunity and that the lives of the people were endangered nightly by heaps of mortar, ashes and rubbish. Most of the streets were less than twenty feet wide. There were no pavements, and the upper stories of the shops and houses, built of timber and plaster with small-paned bay windows and intricate ornamentation, projected over the cobbles.

This, then, was the environment in which the first H. O. Wills started his business with eight workpeople.

To Wills and his workmen the early days of their enterprise must have had the excitement of a great adventure. Week by week, casks of Virginian tobacco were brought from the quayside to the little workshop, where the stems were removed from the leaves and the tobacco prepared for sale. Within sound of the click of looms and the burr of lathes, nine men, without fuss or ceremony, applied their skill and labour to the manufacture of tobacco.

They had plenty to talk about as they worked. In 1786, the year H. O. Wills came to Bristol, enough happened to set the whole city chattering till Candlemas. Here, in headline form, are a few of the incidents that would have provided plenty of gossip at the time:—

The gaoler at Newgate (the prison described by John Howard, the penal reformer, as " white without and foul within ") is forbidden by Act of Parliament to sell intoxicating liquor to prisoners. His salary is thereupon raised from £100 to £200.

The Corporation sends an address of congratulation to King George the Third on his escape from the knife of a lunatic.

In the fashionable western suburb of Clifton, work is begun on the laying-out of Berkeley Square.

Hackney coaches begin to appear in the streets.

At the Angel Cockpit, Redcliff, one of the greatest cock-fighting tournaments ever held in Bristol takes place between the gentry of Gloucestershire and those of Dorset.

Most important event of all was the start in 1786 of Clarkson's campaign against slavery and the growing revulsion in the country to what was undoubtedly a social evil in spite of the kindness of some of the slaves' masters. In 1756 Bristol had carried one-third of the slave trade; in 1771 only twenty-three ships were engaged. Nevertheless, there was still a small but powerful interest in the trade. The price of slaves in Jamaica was about £50 for able-bodied adults and from £40 to £47 for boys and girls. H. O. Wills cannot have been long in Bristol without seeing negro slaves. In July 1790 Hannah More, whose writings on religious and social subjects helped to establish the Religious Tract Society, wrote to Horace Walpole:

" I cannot forbear telling you that at the city of Bristol, during churchtime, the congregations were surprised last Sunday with the bell of the public-crier in the street. It was so unusual a sound on that day that the people were alarmed in the churches. They found that the bellman was crying the reward of a guinea to anyone who would produce a poor negro girl who had run away because she would not return to one of those trafficking islands, whither her master had resolved to send her. To my great grief and indignation, the poor trembling wretch was dragged out from a hole in the top of a house, where she had hid herself, and forced on board ship."

We can picture H. O. Wills when the day's work was over, strolling along the Grove or in Queen Square, listening to the rooks cawing high above the houses of the prosperous merchants. Sometimes he might have visited one of the suburban bowling greens—at the Ostrich Inn, for instance, over Durdham Down. And undoubtedly, in his spare time, he would have made a point of learning as much as possible about the history of the city's tobacco trade.

CHAPTER TWO

BRISTOL AND THE EARLY TOBACCO TRADE

As a west coast port, favourably situated for communication with Virginia and the West Indies, Bristol had engaged in the tobacco trade from its earliest days. In a document dated 9th October 1593 there is record of a ship named the *Tobacco Pipe*, belonging to Thomas Aldworth, a Bristol merchant, being stolen and sold by " lewd mariners ".

The trade between Bristol and Virginia was developing rapidly when, in 1624, James I decreed that all tobacco imported into England should henceforth be landed only at London—an injunction which was repeated by Charles I in 1630 and again in 1634. Had this order been obeyed, Bristol would have suffered considerably as a port. But it was not obeyed. Instead, while the ban on legal importation lasted the merchants of Bristol, ably abetted by the Virginian planters and shipmasters, went in for smuggling on a grand scale.

Sometimes, it is true, a ship would put into Bristol harbour pleading leakage or distress, and the Master would seek official permission to pay duty and discharge the cargo legally. But this course could not be adopted too often, and so the more usual—and cheaper—method was to bribe the Customs officers to let the tobacco in duty free. On one occasion 9,000 lbs. of tobacco was landed at Bristol from a single ship without payment of duty under the benevolent eye of the Customs officials—while when a Special Commission was appointed to investigate this state of affairs it was revealed that one of the Commissioners had himself smuggled the modest total of 400,000 lbs. of tobacco into the port at various times, by " arrangement " with the authorities. On the occasions when such an arrangement was impossible the ship's crew, helped by women and boys from the quayside, would evade the law by deliberate smuggling, and small craft would skim quietly along the water at dead of night to land their contraband cargoes of

" Brandy for the Parson, 'baccy for the Clerk."

In 1638 the ban was removed, and Bristol resumed its proper place in the tobacco trade. By 1670 half of the total shipping tonnage owned by the city was engaged solely in carrying tobacco.

But the business of trading with the New World was not without its hazards. During the second and third Dutch wars Bristol merchants suffered considerable losses due to attacks on their ships both by Dutch raiders and by pirates of all nationalities who were quick to take advantage of the unsettled conditions.

In 1667 nine Bristol ships carrying a total cargo of 6,000 casks of tobacco were

captured and burned by the Dutch in the James River, Virginia, and during the same year an enemy raider actually hunted one of the Virginian merchantmen from Land's End to Lundy Island, abandoning the chase only when its intended victim gained the safety of the King-road.

In 1674 the Third Dutch War came to an end, and the Bristol merchants ceased to be harassed by Dutch privateers. But they were still severely troubled by the " free-lance " pirates who continued to haunt Virginian waters—among them the notorious Captain Teach, alias " Blackbeard ", who was himself a Bristol man. And during the war with France, towards the end of the seventeenth century, they had to contend once more not only with enemy privateers, but also with the press gangs who had an inconvenient habit of carrying off the crews of unguarded merchantmen for service in His Majesty's Navy.

But, privateers and pressmen notwithstanding, trade between Bristol and America continued to thrive. In fact it is recorded in the contemporary Acts of the Privy Council that when, in the 1680s, the Commissioners of Customs tried to regulate the traffic between England and her colonies, one of their greatest problems was the restriction of the trade between Bristol and Virginia, which increased with such rapidity that it continually overflowed the proposed limits.

The names of the ships of the Virginian tobacco fleet are famous in Bristol history—the " Greate John "; " Discovery "; " Greate Jacob " and " Good Intent "; the " Alexander " (captured off Ireland by the Dutch in 1666 with a cargo of 600 casks of tobacco); the " Endeavour ", which had the doubtful honour of being attacked by the notorious pirate Bonnet; the " Joseph "; the " Virginia Merchant ". But the most famous of them all is the " Young Rachel ", immortalized in Thackeray's book " The Virginians ". Far from being a figment of the author's imagination as so many people believe, the " Young Rachel "—familiar to millions as the ship in the quayside scene on the cartons of " The Three Castles " cigarettes—was in fact one of the pioneer ships of the Bristol tobacco trade.

In the City Art Gallery there is an interesting painting by Peter Monamy of the quayside at Bristol during the seventeenth century. The scene is one of great activity. While goods are being discharged from ships by means of hand cranes, casks of tobacco from America and barrels of rum from the Indies are being dragged away on sledges. No carts were allowed in the city at that period, as most of the streets were built over vaults. Among the bystanders in the scene are a milkmaid and a surgeon, who is wearing a red cloak. About that time it was usual for smoking to take place at midnight funerals, when the coffin was borne along the streets with all the vanished splendour of wax-lights and flambeaux, plumes and pennons, escutcheons and mutes.

For nearly thirty years after 1660 Bristol ranked second only to London as a tobacco port. Towards the end of the century, however, the growing Northern

ports—Chester, Liverpool, Workington and Whitehaven—began to take a share in the trade. And after the Union of 1707, when Scottish and English ports were given equal trading rights, Glasgow rapidly rose to eminence as one of the great tobacco ports in the United Kingdom.

But the volume of trade in the country was itself increasing rapidly, and despite keen competition Bristol continued to measure her tobacco imports in terms of hundreds of thousands of pounds annually.

As one of the largest ports in the country for the landing of tobacco from America it was natural that Bristol should become an important centre for the manufacture of tobacco, and the Rolls of the Freemen of Bristol during that period contain a high proportion of " tobacconists " (who in those days were the manufacturers of tobacco, not the retailers), " tobacco cutters ", " tobacco rollers ", and " tobacco pipe makers ".

One of the firms already established in 1722 was that of David Thomas, of 111-112 Redcliff Street—a business absorbed later by Wills. Another early eighteenth century tobacconist in Bristol was Thomas Parrot, of St. Mary Redcliffe Parish, whose name appears as a voter in the poll book for 1722. It has been suggested that this tobacconist was the original owner of the " parrot " sign which now hangs outside the Wills management offices at Bedminster, but Latimer, the Bristol chronicler, claims that the sign used to hang over the shop of a William Hulme, a snuffmaker of Mary-le-Port Street, who in 1754 leased a windmill at Cotham and transformed it into a snuff factory. The stonework of the mill forms the foundation of the tower now standing in Cotham Park.

Perhaps the most interesting link in the history of the tobacco trade between Bristol and America is a letter now in the firm's possession which was written to a Bristol manufacturer in 1759 by George Washington, the Virginian tobacco planter who later became the first President of the United States. The letter reads:

Virginia. 25th November, 1759.

Gentlemen,

Some time this week I expect to get on board the Cary to your House Fifty hogsheads of Tobacco of my own and Jno. Park Curtis's, which please to Insure in the usual manner. I shall also by the same Ship send you ten or twelve Hogsheads more if I can get them on board in time, but this I believe will be impracticable if Captn. Tulman uses that dispatch in loading which he now has in his power to do.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your Most Obedient Humble Servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

P.S. My Goods per Captn. James Yates are arrived in James River, and I thank you for your diligence in sending them.

Robert Cary Esqre and Company.

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY DAYS

THE house of Wills grew up at a particularly interesting and important time in our national history; a time when the cottager could not only hear the hum of the spinning wheel at his own fireside but could look across the fields and valleys to see smoke rising from the chimneys of countless new factories in the distant city.

This was the Industrial Revolution. England was changing from a primarily agricultural country to one that drew people more and more to earn their living by working in the factories. Hargreaves' spinning jenny, Arkwright's water-frame and Watt's steam-engine were some of the inventions that contributed to the new role England was to play as a leader of industrial power and manufacturing enterprise.

Research in recent years has suggested that the Industrial Revolution was more gradual and less catastrophic, particularly in Bristol and the South West, than was formerly supposed. In 1818, for instance, when rioters in other parts of the country were disturbing the peace, the citizens of Bristol were still discussing the indiscretions of the Prince Regent and the downfall of Napoleon. (In words that recall a communiqué of the Second World War at the time of the liberation of Europe, a newspaper announced: " The deliverance of the Continent, with many troops is now nearly consummated ").

Nevertheless the use of machinery in place of laborious hand processes gradually spread throughout the country. The machinery was, of course, primitive compared with that in use to-day. An early type of tobacco-cutting machine was worked by one man turning a winch handle. Later this was adapted so that it could be turned by a horse harnessed to a revolving shaft. Slow though they may have been, these methods were a great advance on cutting by hand.

Much has been written about the effect of the Industrial Revolution on the people. In some cases—notoriously in the textile mills of the North of England—it led to underpayment and bad working conditions, long hours and the exploitation of child and female labour. In others, the introduction of machinery and the housing of employees in properly equipped and organised factories meant better, easier working conditions, and higher wages as a result of improved output. It all depended on the attitude of the employer.

When a nineteenth century industrialist said, " It is impossible to mix masters and men ", he may have been speaking for a number of his fellows. He was not speaking for such men as H. O. Wills, who made a practice of inviting four

of his eight workpeople home to dinner one Sunday and the other four the next.

Such records as remain of these early days in the firm's history are not as full, either in personal or general detail, as we could wish. It is said that Wedgwood, the Staffordshire potter, used to stump about on his wooden leg, smashing any pot that had the slightest flaw, and chalk on the workman's bench: " This won't do for Josiah Wedgwood ". We do not know if H. O. Wills used similar methods, though some of his descendants were no less dramatic and unexpected in their ways.

But omissions in a firm's history can be as significant as what has been included. The facts we do know—the removal from Castle Street in 1791, when H. O. Wills joined forces with Peter Lilly at 112 Redcliff Street in the business of Lilly & Wills, the absorption of other firms, and still further changes in name—all these events suggest an era of consolidation and enterprise. While workpeople in other parts of the country were destroying their machines and burning hayricks in outbursts of hunger and hatred, the early Wills employees were quietly stripping tobacco leaf and talking about the new cutting machine.

It was these people and their successors, with H. O. Wills working in their midst, whose example led Canon Rawnsley later in the century to write his sonnet on the portrait gallery of old employees at the Redcliff Street factory:

Well has the painter given them their reward!
Yea, their own faces do the truth commend!
Their honest purpose, and that purpose' end,
Has filled their eyes, and deep their foreheads scarred.
Early and late, these servants toiling hard,
For half the days God unto man will lend,
Merged the old name of Master into Friend,
And helped his fortunes in the factory yard.
When love, not need, makes swift the workman's hand,
Love, not exaction, is the Lord's demand,
Sure unto each the other's aim is known,
And studying this all best conserve their own;
By God, not man, the whole machine is swayed,
And prospering well, more smoothly runs the trade.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND GENERATION

In 1830, when the accession of King William the Fourth was celebrated in Bristol by the gift of porter and sherry to the citizens, those who worked for Wills also saw the beginning of a new regime in their own firm. It became known for the first time as W. D. & H. O. Wills.

The two sons of the original H. O. Wills had taken over the business when their father died in 1826. William Day Wills, the elder son, took his second Christian name from his mother, formerly Anne Day, daughter of William Day, of Bristol. W. D. Wills was born in 1797 in the gabled Redcliff Street house (with its fine bowling green extending to Redcliff Back) where his father worked as well as lived.

W. D. joined the firm in the year of the Battle of Waterloo. As senior partner he gave his business the wholehearted attention it needed at an early and difficult time. Plain-dealing and unassuming, he cherished his quiet domesticity in Pritchard Street and Portland Square. Although he took a less prominent part in public affairs than his son (the future Lord Winterstoke), he was a magistrate, councillor, and charity commissioner of Bristol.

W. D.'s deafness contributed to the accident that led to his death in 1865, when he was knocked down by a horse-omnibus in Snow Hill, London. Lord Dulverton was told by his father (Sir Frederick Wills) that when W. D. was lying in the road with both legs broken a policeman came up and exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Wills, I am indeed sorry to see you in such a plight". The policeman was a young man from Bristol and was probably the only one in London who could have known W. D. According to Sir Frederick Wills, this was the last of many accidents which led to the decision to construct Holborn Viaduct.

Between thirty and forty ministers of various denominations were among the two thousand people who attended W. D.'s burial in the family vault at the Arno's Vale cemetery. Like his brothers Henry Overton and Frederick, W. D. Wills had been associated with Penn Street Tabernacle, founded by George Whitfield in 1752. Their father had been a manager of the Tabernacle (one of the leading churches in Bristol) and all three members of the family were zealous members of the Bristol Union Society for the Promotion of Sunday Schools, formed after a meeting presided over by the original H. O. Wills at John Wesley's first chapel in Broadmead in 1813. It was in Bristol, too, in 1794, that H. O. Wills suggested the formation of the London Missionary Society. Like the Quaker families of

Fry and Cadbury, the Wills attached great importance to religious influences and observances, and until recent times every young person applying for employment at a Wills factory was required to have been a member of a Sunday School.

H. O., the junior partner, also entered the firm in 1815. He inherited from his father not only a share in the business but a "beaming, benevolent countenance" and a particularly kind and hospitable disposition. He, too, was a councillor and Justice of the Peace. He helped to found Highbury Chapel in 1843 and took an ardent interest in village churches. During his lifetime—he died in 1871—he collected thirty silver trowels, one for each time he had laid the foundation stone of a church. He had a great respect and affection for his workpeople. At the time of the American Civil War, when there was a serious shortage of imported leaf in this country, a well-known Bristol man stopped him in the street one day and said sympathetically, "You'll have to get rid of some of your workpeople, won't you?" "I can't do that", replied Mr. Wills. "These men have their wives and children to keep. I'll pawn my shirt before I do that."

Both W. D. and H. O. Wills were non-smokers. It is said that H. O. Wills, out of curiosity, once took a few puffs at a cigar in an office at the Redcliff Street factory. Disliking the cigar, he threw it away, thereby setting fire to a waste paper basket. But there was no disastrous effect, either on the factory or the smoker.

To the Wills family and their workpeople, absorbed in the quiet routine of the daily round, even a little incident like this must have seemed an event. But outside the factory walls there were more serious upsets and less innocent conflagrations. During the general election of 1830, when a Bristol factory was ransacked and when friends of a candidate were attacked with bludgeons by a party of political opponents on horseback, the vote-catching tactics of the rival parties were even more violent than those observed by Mr. Pickwick at Eatanswill.

By 1831, the year of the Bristol Riots, the population of Bristol had risen to 134,000, compared with 36,000 in 1750. During the Riots soldiers charging across Queen Square with sword and sabre were powerless to prevent the burning and looting of the Mansion House and Customs House and the destruction of the city gaol by a wine-frenzied mob. The lighting up of the city by flames rising from Queen Square and the Bishop's Palace were well remembered in later life by Mary Luff, who worked as a cook at the Wills factory in Redcliff Street in the eighteen sixties and who died in 1922, as Bristol's oldest inhabitant, at the age of 105. When the riots broke out she was fourteen. The times, she said, were too troublous for young girls to be abroad.

As the years passed, the name of Wills became increasingly associated with sound and steady business enterprise. In 1833 the firm amalgamated with Ricketts, Leonard, Ricketts & Co. of 33 Mary-le-Port Street—the business being conducted from both the Redcliff Street and the Mary-le-Port Street premises.

In 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne, a little group of

workpeople assembled to say goodbye to one of their oldest members; Luke Thomas, retiring after forty-one years' service, had ground snuff in the mill at Cotham. His thrift would have pleased those early nineteenth-century moralists who thought that self-help was the one thing needful. From his wage of ten shillings a week, Luke saved between three and four hundred pounds—the equivalent of more than £5,000 at the present day. It is said that he toasted a rasher of bacon but, instead of eating it straight away, let the fat drop on the bread which he then ate for his breakfast. It was not till dinner-time that he ate the rasher itself.

Several people whose portraits can now be seen at Bedminster started work in the eighteen-thirties. Jane Fackrell, the first woman in the portrait gallery, began in the spinning room in 1831 at the age of ten. Her portrait, painted after fifty-five years' service, shows her in a Victorian bonnet and a dignified black dress trimmed with white lace. As for Elizabeth Chapman, she was only nine when she started to stem tobacco in the last year of King William's reign. She continued to work for forty-nine years and to enjoy her pension for another thirty-one.

Then there was Tom Long. He too started work at the age of nine. His father used to carry him on his back in a sack from Kingswood to Bristol. Tom could neither read nor write. In his sober moments he was a good worker and he blew the organ at Redland Park Congregational Church. One day he was sacked for being drunk. His fellows were surprised when he came to work next day as usual. When his master questioned him he replied, " If thee doesn't know when thee's got a good servant I know when I got a good master. I b'aint going." And he stayed till 1882.

These early portraits, some of which were painted by George Arthur Fripp and James Curnock, are full of character and point. They have an historical and social interest as abiding links with a vanished world, typified for instance by the traditional snuff-makers' caps, made by the men themselves from brown paper and seen in the portraits of Tom Long, James Low and William George (the first and second men respectively to drive the steam engine installed at the Redcliff Street factory in 1861), James Stone (chief stover in the Cutting Room and father-in-law of Sam Prew), and Henry Stallard (foreman of the Stripping Room).

The first portrait of all—that of John Wilmott, who was in charge of the Ricketts shop in Mary-le-Port Street at the time of the French Revolution—shows the type of wig worn by Dr. Johnson in the taverns and salons of eighteenth-century London. Luke Thomas is depicted in the kind of abbreviated top hat that was coming into fashion towards the end of the reign of George the Third. The first person to have a characteristically Victorian appearance is Sindry Palmer (father of Fred Palmer, the firm's secretary in the 'nineties), complete with black frock coat and long white beard like that of an Old Testament prophet.

These portraits, pleasant in themselves as pictures and fascinating as a social record, are possibly unique in British industry as a tribute by the management to their employees. The custom of commemorating an employee's forty years' service by an oil painting was discontinued in 1932, and replaced by a studio photograph. In 1949, however, it was decided that three representative oil portraits a year should be painted and added to the gallery.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE 1840's

In 1844 a Select Committee reported to the House of Commons on the state of the tobacco trade, and among the witnesses who travelled to London to give evidence was H. O. Wills the Second.

The Committee was enquiring into complaints by manufacturers about smuggling and the adulteration of tobacco. For five months the Committee sat considering evidence from many different types of people directly or indirectly connected with the trade. Among those examined were smugglers, who were offered an indemnity for speaking the truth. One witness said 150 pounds of stalks had been smuggled in the bottoms of poultry baskets from Holland; and Mr. Horatio Nelson Davis, a London broker, believed that from twenty to twenty-five million pounds of tobacco were smuggled in a single year. Smugglers were no longer acting with force and bloodshed; they made cunning use of the greater facilities given them by bribery, and by coasters, billy-boys, fishing boats and vessels from foreign parts.

The Tobacco Act of 1842, restricting the manufacturer to the use of tobacco and water only, had failed to prevent adulteration. Even while the Committee was sitting, officials in Hull found a quantity of beech leaves that had been stained to resemble Shag, Returns and Rappee snuff. The specimens sent to the Committee were such good imitations that no member could spot the difference.

H. O. Wills told the Chancellor of the Exchequer that a principal cause of the evils into which the Committee was enquiring was the high duty on tobacco (3s. 2d. per pound), which made it difficult for the honest manufacturer to carry on his business. The Committee, though regretting that the honest manufacturer should suffer, refused to recommend a reduction in duty.

In modern times tobacco has always been heavily taxed. In 1786 the duty was only 10d. It rose to 4s. in 1815, when the Napoleonic wars had drained the country's finances, and it was not until 1831 that the tax was reduced to 3s. Up to 1825 there were both Customs and Excise duties: after that date the tax was collected wholly by the Customs Office at the port of importation. Between 1811 and 1831 the price of Virginian tobacco in bond was hardly ever more than 8d. a pound. Occasionally it was as low as 2½d. or even 2d.

The Government enquiry of 1844 gives a useful glimpse of smokers' tastes and preferences in that era. It was estimated that eleven-twelfths of the revenue drawn from tobacco came from the poorer people, whose favourite types of pipe

tobacco were Cut Roll and Shag. Shag (used either for smoking or chewing) cost 3d. an ounce. According to several witnesses, rich people and " the better class of mechanics " were smoking cigars rather than pipes. Cigar-smoking had been introduced into England by veterans of the Peninsular War, who adopted the custom from the Spaniards. In an article, " A Day at a Tobacco Manufactory " in *The Penny Magazine* in November 1841, the writer recorded: " Now every stripling who is just shooting up into manhood thinks a cigar indispensable as a symbol whereby the world may know that he has at length become a man." The writer added that the duty on foreign cigars was so high (9s. per pound) that only a small quantity was imported from abroad compared with leaf tobacco. In the late 'forties Wills were selling cigars but did not begin to manufacture them till 1882.

It was towards the end of the eighteen-forties that Wills introduced some of their most famous pipe brands, notably Best Bird's Eye tobacco and Bishop Blaze shag. On the authority of the *Trade Marks Journal* of September 12th 1877, it is known that both these brands were in use in 1849, and it is possible that the date may have been even earlier. From the same source we learn Superfine Shag was being smoked in 1847 and that Fine Shag (packed in a paper wrapping containing the portrait of a negro) was in use before 1837.

Bird's Eye contained a piece of stalk which, when mixed with the fine thread-like fibres into which the leaf was cut, gave the appearance of a number of bird's eyes. Bishop Blaze was named after an Armenian bishop, Blaise (or Blasius), who was martyred in A.D. 316 by order of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. His flesh was torn with sharp iron combs, and these are shown on the old woodcut label advertising the Wills brand. The bishop was canonised in the Middle Ages and adopted as patron saint of the Woolcombers, who celebrated St. Blaise's Day in the wool towns of Yorkshire and in other parts of the country.

In 1847 the firm had three travellers: Mr. Simpson, Mr. Sam Ditchett, who was afterwards head of the firm of Hudden & Ditchett, and Mr. Mogg. These early travellers, setting off with samples and order books, were the successors of the old eighteenth-century travelling merchants, with their strings of pack horses that took them to the great fairs. W. H. Wills (the future Lord Winterstoke), who joined the firm in 1847 at the age of seventeen, was himself a traveller twelve years later. Recalling those days at a staff dinner in 1894, he said, " I went forth as a wanderer on the face of the earth. I had a horse that cost me fifty guineas of my own choosing and a four-wheeled dog-cart newly varnished and picked out in my own colour. At that time it was the usual thing to see twelve or fourteen whips at an hotel, and as many travelling coats. Now, I venture to say, from Land's End to John O'Groats you won't find a silver-mounted driving whip in any hotel. I believe there are very few horses now in use by commercials."

Even in their own lifetimes the three Wills travellers at the end of the eighteen-forties had seen a revolution in transport. The 'twenties and early 'thirties were

the great days of coaches. In 1836 there were still more than 3,000 on the road, some travelling at the daring rate of ten miles an hour. But in the same year a rival method of transport, the railway, was attracting great public curiosity. Among the names in the first register of shareholders in the Great Western Railway were those of W. D. Wills and his brother H. O. W. D. also became chairman of the Bristol and Exeter Railway. By 1840 the new trains were already taking over the passenger and parcels traffic from the canals and turnpike roads, and after 1845 an English family could " travel third " at the rate of a penny a mile.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FIRST OUTING

In 1851 the employees of W. D. & H. O. Wills—some 120 strong by this time—went to see the Great Exhibition in London. This was a doubly auspicious occasion, for it was the first of the factory outings which were later to become annual events, until superseded by the introduction of holidays with pay in 1891.

We can well imagine the bustle and excitement as the workpeople gathered at the station that summer morning, each with a golden sovereign " spending money "—a gift from the partners. It is possible that some of them had never travelled in a train before. It is probable that this was the first time that some of them had been to London. It is certain that once they had arrived there and had been taken to the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in horse-buses driven by gold-laced drivers they had enough to talk about for the rest of their lives.

Here, in the original Crystal Palace, with glass domes so lofty that they enclosed a couple of elms, were eight miles of exhibits representing the peaceful arts and manufactures, assembled from every corner of the world. Slowly and admiringly the Wills workpeople walked through avenues and glittering gardens, rubbing shoulders with top-hatted and bonneted English visitors and turbanned Indians alike, catching if they were lucky a glimpse of the bent but proud figure of the Duke of Wellington in the last year of his life, and looking with undisguised delight at the flying wonders and aerial machines (an anticipation of the aeroplane), the massive statue of Queen Victoria, the model ships and locomotives, the rich merchandise of the East and the tropical plants that harmonised so well with the conservatory style of architecture, and the myriads of products and inventions in the Palace of Manufactures.

This was the Age of Iron and Coal. John Bull, still a countryman but only just, could look at brasswork and metallic bedsteads from Birmingham, bronze and cast iron bracelets from Berlin. For those with more mechanical tastes there were a portable four-horse steam-engine, a knife with three hundred blades, a railway-ticket printing machine, hats that prevented any risk of concussion during a train journey, and a clock inscribed with texts from the Bible by which " a palpable waste of time might be more vividly brought to the remembrance of the time-waster ".

Wills visitors who wished to talk shop could inspect the display of leaf tobacco —cigars from Maryland, Latakia tobacco from Turkey and cut tobacco from Portugal, Meerschaum pipe bowls from Austria, and clay pipes from Hamburg.

There was even a patent fumigator in which tobacco was used as a disinfectant. The tobacco was placed in the magazine at the top and lighted as if it were an ordinary smoking pipe. A draught of air, produced by the revolutions of a fan, drew the smoke in at one point and drove it forcibly out at another, concentrated and in a cool state.

To the visual impressiveness and social importance of the Exhibition must be added a third consideration: the industrial. The Great Exhibition celebrated the success of the small firm. Look through the catalogue and it will be seen to contain the names not of a few big business houses but those of many small concerns.

At that time W. D. & H. O. Wills was still a small firm. But it was already an established, steadily prospering business, and the soundness of its development was a valuable basis for the more rapid expansion of the next thirty years.

William Day Wills and Henry Overton Wills, even at that early stage, had no doubts whatsoever about the future prospects of their firm. In 1851 they ordered a telephone to connect the Redcliff Street and Mary-le-Port Street premises—which, according to the Post Office Magazine, was " the first electric apparatus fitted up in the provinces for private business transactions ".

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE THIRD GENERATION

DESPITE the fillip given to British industry by the Great Exhibition, manufacturers like W. D. & H. O. Wills were confronted with many obstacles during the next twenty years: smuggling, duty, and the decline in imports during the American Civil War.

There were social as well as economic obstacles to overcome. In genteel Victorian circles pipe-smoking and snuff-taking had gone out of fashion, and cigars, though considered more respectable than pipes, were subjected to rigorous social control.

Etiquette books of the early Victorian period decreed that a gentleman must never smoke or ask to smoke in the presence of a lady: nor must he offer a cigar to a clergyman above the rank of curate. Smokers either took their pleasures furtively (like the bishops who were found on their knees puffing clouds of tobacco up the chimney at Windsor Castle) or else behaved according to specially prescribed rules.

When the ladies retired, the gentlemen were allowed to put on their smoking caps and jackets, designed to prevent the smell of smoke from clinging to the hair and dress-coats. Smoking rooms did not come into fashion till later in the century. If a man wished to smoke he could do so out of doors or in the stables, or, if the servants had gone to bed, in the servants' hall. The Duke of Wellington, in 1845, issued an order asking officers to discourage smoking in the mess. *Punch*, then in its fourth year, commented mockingly on the disastrous effects likely to result if officers were thus " thrown back on their conversational resources ".

The railway traveller was in no happier position. It was announced in the first Bradshaw guide, published in 1840, that there was to be no smoking either at stations or in carriages. In 1853 a traveller was awarded " restricted damages " in an action against a railway company. Having " smelt someone smoking " in another compartment, he based his claim on the danger from fire and on the injury to his feelings.

Meanwhile the British working man, unperturbed by social fancies, went on smoking his old clay pipe. Wills offered him a wide choice of brands. Their stock book for 1855 listed Superfine, Dutch Cut, Turkey, Orinoco, Virginia Returns, Real Varmas, Real Latakia, Real Yara, Cut Cavendish, Bright Red Rag, Fine Bird's Eye, Shag Bird's Eye, Bogie Roll, Alloa Roll, Negrohead or Real Havanah.

A writer in 1855 was particularly impressed with the firm's pigtail, describing it as " almost fabulous, difficulty being found in executing orders, so great is the demand ". Pigtail is a roll tobacco, cord-like in form, and requiring for its manufacture in early days the simultaneous aid of a man and two boys. At one end of the bench used for making this kind of tobacco was a kind of spinning wheel, kept in rotation by one of the boys. Customers at this time could see what they were buying by the colour of the labels and packets. Common tobaccos were packed with black-printed labels, best qualities in red-printed packets.

By now a third generation had come into the firm—William Henry Wills (later Lord Winterstoke) and his cousins Henry Overton (the Third), Edward Payson (afterwards Sir Edward) and Frederick (afterwards Sir Frederick). Between 1859 and 1861 several employees who were later to become prominent joined the firm: Clara Sweet (who became Forewoman of the Cigarette Department and who died in 1943 in her ninety-seventh year), T. H. Cundy (a traveller in Wales and the West of England) and H. B. Marshall (who, at the time of his retirement, was manager of the Redcliff Street factory).

Early one September morning in 1859 a servant at the old Swan Hotel in Bristol ran up to a policeman on his beat and reported that a building was on fire in Mary-le-Port Street. Soon after the alarm had been given half a dozen horse fire-engines belonging to a local insurance company and the Police were galloping to the scene. (A fire engine of this period can be seen in the Bristol City Museum). The building on fire was the Western Counties Music Hall. Boxes, galleries, stage—all were in the thick of the flames, and the police concentrated on trying to save the adjoining buildings.

The Wills factory, in particular, was in great danger. Twice the roof was on fire: each time the fireman prevented the flames from gaining a hold. A large quantity of tobacco that had arrived only the previous day from Liverpool, and about a hundred bags of snuff each worth about £50, were removed to the vaults under the warehouse. Once the stock had been safely moved the engines were brought to play on the burning roof, and the fire was soon extinguished. Some of the stock and machinery in the Cutting Room were slightly damaged by water: otherwise no harm was done to the interior of the premises. The music hall was burnt out.

During the eighteen-sixties the Mary-le-Port Street premises were used for snuff-making, the grinding being done at Redcliff Street in the Mill Room (formerly the chapel of the house). After having inspected the fine Elizabethan room with a decorated ceiling on the ground floor, a visitor to the Mary-le-Port Street factory in 1865 would have gone upstairs to the warerooms to see casks, tins and bladders of Scotch, Scented and Rappee snuff, together with Prince's Mixture as formerly taken by George the Fourth and the ladies of the Court. An old woman who kept a shop in the country had an annual account of £500 with Wills for snuff alone.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BRISTOL AND LONDON

SNUFF at Mary-le-Port Street, tobacco at Redcliff; that was the manufacturing position at the beginning of the eighteen sixties, a decade that was to see the opening of the London House and the erection of new premises in Redcliff Street.

In 1861 the first steam engine was installed at the Redcliff Street factory and driven by James Low. About this time, too, the firm began to use a cutting machine of new design. The tobacco leaves, put in at one end of a channel and moved by a self-propelling screw to the other, passed over a constantly-revolving cylinder or drum, on which they were cut into fine shreds one-hundredth of an inch wide. The first cutting machine used by Wills is believed to have been a Greig. This was succeeded by Legg wood-drum machines (later improved by the addition of a band feed), Legg iron-drum, balanced head machines, and, much later, Molins rotary tobacco cutting machines.

The first of many exhibition honours awarded to the firm was the Diploma, at the London Exhibition in 1862, for Fine Bird's Eye. This tobacco was sold in a paper wrapping, with the prize medal printed in blue. Best Bristol Bird's Eye was sent out only in red-lettered packets, each bearing the familiar picture of the pipe-smoking negro.

" You're not Mr. Wills. I have his picture on the packet ", said a Welsh customer to Mr. E. P. Wills when he was deputising for a regular traveller. (That, at least, is the traditional story).

These little red-lettered packets of Bird's Eye had now achieved an international reputation. Sold in Bristol, London, Manchester, Liverpool and many other parts of England, they were also sent to Europe, Asia and Australia, the packets being strengthened for export by wrappings of lead foil inside the paper.

Bird's Eye was the theme of some truly tender lines in *Punch:*

> From witching eyes what fascinations dart,
> Piercing their way like bullets from a pistol;
> No eye, save one, can so subdue my heart—
> Thy Bird's Eye, BRISTOL.

A Bristol journalist in 1865 was moved to similar eloquence in prose. Picturing a traveller in Egypt filling his pipe with Bird's Eye at the foot of the Pyramids, and a bank clerk at Adelaide waiting anxiously for the arrival of an English vessel with packages of Wills's Best, the writer continued " Its name is as ' familiar in our mouths ' as a household word. The seedy young actor that sucks a dirty

cutty is redolent of Bird's Eye; the ' fast dog ' about town fills his briar root with Bird's Eye; the fashionable novice at swelldom luxuriates in a meerschaum-censer, in which is burnt the incense of Bird's Eye; and the good-hearted jolly old English gentleman puffs with a persevering and energetically silent puffing at the capacious ' churchwarden ' that is lined with Bird's Eye ".

Two-thirds of the firm's employees at this time were women and girls, some of whom made up the packets of Bird's Eye in the Beating-up Shop (as it was then called) on the ground floor at Redcliff Street. A hollow tin cylinder with a funnel-shaped mouth was used as a mould, round which was wrapped the paper. After the required quantity of tobacco had been inserted through the funnel the tin cylinder was withdrawn, leaving the tobacco pressed down in the ingeniously folded paper which, when closed at the top and sealed up, made a complete packet. The oldest of the patterns used on the packets was a woodcut representing two men racing on horseback, smoking pipes and whipping their horses with bundles of tobacco leaves. Over the picture and printed in old type was the motto, " Best Smoak wins the Day ". A woman who was expert at making up the packets could work through fifty pounds of tobacco a day.

By 1864—a year that saw the introduction of such diverse blessings as Clifton Suspension Bridge and over-arm bowling in cricket matches—the firm was paying nearly £2,000 a week in duty alone, and future prospects could be said to be good. New premises were built in Redcliff Street in 1869 and opened in 1870.

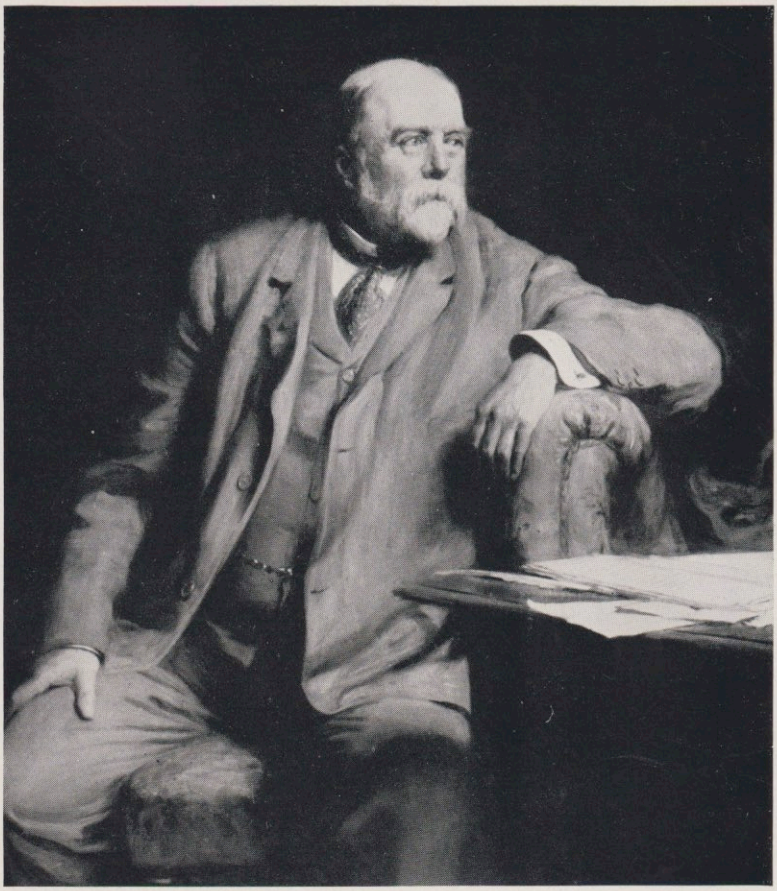
During the early 'seventies the firm ceased to use the premises at Mary-le-Port Street, which in 1873-4 were occupied by Messrs. James and Gayner (tobacco and snuff merchants), in 1875 by Messrs. Lindrea (leather merchants) and in 1876 by Messrs. James and Barnard (tobacco merchants). Records show that in 1889 Wills paid land-tax on 33 Mary-le-Port Street, and that E. G. Barnard was the occupier. Early in 1891 the firm sold 33 (formerly 34) Mary-le-Port Street to Messrs. Lindrea, for £1,300 and leased No. 35 from them for six years.

Meanwhile developments were also taking place elsewhere. In 1864 Frederick Wills had become manager of the firm's office in London. This was the prelude to the opening of the London House at 60 and 61 Long Acre, Smithfield, in 1865. It was while looking for a suitable site for this House that Mr. W. D. Wills was run over and killed by a horse-bus at the bottom of Snow Hill, near Holborn Bridge, in the summer of 1865. After his death the words " and Sons " were added to the firm's title of W. D. & H. O. Wills.

Manufacturing at the London House started almost immediately. Five years later there was a removal to 43 Cross Street, Finsbury Pavement, where the firm stayed another five years. Holborn Viaduct was then being built, and amid the rubble and debris left by demolition work the premises at No. 53 began to take shape. In 1875 the London staff moved into these new premises—one of the first houses to be built in Holborn Viaduct, almost in the shadow of St. Paul's.

Mr. Frederick Wills, by now a partner in the firm, was responsible for the supervision of the London House. Mr. William Jollyman, the manager, had an office staff of six, including a clerk who was also ledger-keeper and cashier. Three travellers—Mr. E. S. Webb, Mr. Charles McKay and Mr. W. Ford—covered London, the whole of Scotland and Ireland, and the Southern Counties respectively. It often took these travellers three months to complete their rounds of calls.

Counter sales, packing and dispatch were carried out on the ground floor, which also contained the offices. Thirty barrels stood in the middle of the room that comprised almost the whole of the ground floor. When a customer asked for tobacco the packer went to the particular barrel, took out the quantity required, and packed it straight away. Manufacturing was done in the basement, where machines had been installed. Among the brands of pipe tobacco manufactured at this time were Honey Cut, Golden Virginia, Black Jack and Old Friend. But the most important development at the London House, and one that was watched with great interest by the whole industry, was not the appearance of new brands for the pipe-smoker but the quick and practical way in which the House met the demand for a new form of smoking: the cigarette.



LORD WINTERSTOKE
1830—1911

CHAPTER NINE

THE FIRST CIGARETTES

CIGARETTES were known in Brazil as early as the 17th century where they took the form of paper-wrapped tubes of tobacco known as papeletes. From Brazil the papelete was introduced into Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Levant and France. Towards the end of the 18th century Casanova saw a Spanish inn-keeper smoking a Brazilian cigarette and recorded the incident in his memoirs. There is an old Spanish proverb—" A paper cigarette, a glass of fresh water, and the kiss of a pretty girl will maintain a man a day without eating ".

It was not until the Crimean War that cigarettes were smoked in any quantity by the British. During that war British troops who had seen their Turkish and French allies smoking cigarettes began to copy them, and introduced the practice into this country on their return. There are early references to cigarettes in the works of Dickens, Thackeray, Lytton and Wilkie Collins.

The first cigarette factory in England was opened at Walworth in 1856 by Robert Peacock Gloag, a Scotsman who had been Paymaster to the Turkish forces in the Crimean War. He delivered the cigarettes to his customers by dog-cart. These early cigarettes were made from cylinders of straw-coloured paper and had cane tips. The tobacco was inserted in the cylinders through a funnel. The cigarettes were thicker and longer than those of the present day.

In other early types of cigarettes the cane or wooden mouthpiece was pierced with holes; some had cardboard mouthpieces after the Russian fashion; and there were even glass mouthpieces.

Apart from Gloag, the pioneers of the cigarette industry were a handful of Russians and Greeks. It is believed by some students of smoking that a Greek named Nicholas Contopoulis was one of the earliest cigarette manufacturers in this country. In 1858, it is said, he had a shop in Queen Victoria Street, London. Three years later what is believed by others to have been the first cigarette store in London was opened by John Theodoridi, a Greek captain in the Russian army who came over here to make Turkish cigarettes. Passers-by in Leicester Square were fascinated when they looked in the window and saw a staff of Odessa cutters and rollers working on cigarettes that bore the explosive name, " Voronzoff ". These had no inserted tip; with one end turned in, the cylinders were not completely filled.

Cigarettes did not begin to achieve any general popularity in this country, however, until about 1870, with the introduction of cigarettes made from bright

Virginia flue-cured tobacco and wrapped in specially made, fine texture paper.

Wills entered the cigarette market in 1871 with " Bristol " cigarettes—manufactured at their London House but named after the city which was the firm's home. A team of foreign workers under a foreman named Bogosoff was engaged to instruct the firm's employees in the art of cigarette-making, first in London and later in Bristol.

" Bristol " cigarettes were followed in 1874 by " Passing Clouds ". Other early brands were Best Bird's Eye, Oxford and Cambridge, Eothen, Louisville, Pasha, Evening Star, Heartsease, Golden Honeydew and Dubec Moyen. They were packed in cardboard boxes of tens, twelves or twenty-fours, or in oval or square-wrapped packets.

In 1877 W. D. & H. O. Wills introduced Three Castles tobacco, followed a year later by Three Castles cigarettes. This brand name was adopted as the result of a suggestion by an Edinburgh sealing wax and stationery manufacturer named George Waterston. He was a smoker of Wills's Bird's Eye tobacco, in praise of which he had written several times to the firm. In December 1876 he wrote " It has often occurred to me that it would be worthwhile for a Bristol tobacco manufacturer to bring out a first-rate tobacco under the brand of the Three Castles as described by Thackeray in his novel ' The Virginians ', where he says, 'There's no sweeter tobacco comes from Virginia and no better brand than the Three Castles '. There is a capital design drawn by Thackeray himself on page 134, I think, of the original edition. It is an initial T with a shield at the side with the Three Castles on it which would make a good design for the wrapper ".

The idea was taken up, and in March 1877 Mr. George Wills wrote to Waterston: " After a good deal of delay and consequent trouble, we have at last succeeded in getting a label designed and printed for the Three Castles Tobacco and we have much pleasure in asking your acceptance of the first packet which has left our works. Should the article become a noted one—which its quality and fine flavour render probable—you may feel an interest in knowing that you were the first to suggest to us its excellent title as well as to prove the truth of Thackeray's statement ".

Mr. Waterston liked the new tobacco, and said so. He hoped it would have a good sale. He suggested that the label might be improved—it needed the " quaint simplicity of the Bird's Eye label "—and that when the firm was quite satisfied with the tobacco and packing it would be a good idea to send a packet to the editors of " Punch ", " The Athenaeum ", " The Academy " and " Times ", and " The Scotsman ", as he thought it would " tickle the fancy of the literary people ".

Three Castles soon tickled the fancy not only of literary people but of all discriminating smokers. Before long the public was becoming familiar with the design on the packet—the ship, the casks of tobacco on the quay, the youth

reclining and smoking a cigarette, and the shield bearing the Three Castles. The introduction of this shield in 1877 had been preceded in May 1876 by that of the star—the registered trade mark of W. D. & H. O. Wills.

The successful introduction of cigarettes was the most spectacular happening in the 'seventies, but other developments were taking place which were also of great importance.

In the winter of 1878-9 electric light was installed for the first time in the Redcliff Street factory. Fitted under the supervision of a scientist from Bristol University College (forerunner of the University), an American Wallace-Farmer lamp was used for supplying the light. The new device was particularly useful in enabling workpeople in the Leaf Room to sort the tobacco accurately. Wills were among the first firms to use this invention, which must have seemed a great wonder to a visitor from the East, the Crown Prince of Siam, when he visited the factory in the early 'eighties.

In 1879 an important concession was gained which helped the firm's export trade in that year. The French Government honoured W. D. & H. O. Wills with a large order for Best Bird's Eye tobacco and cigarettes, which were placed on sale at an hotel in Paris. This meant much to the firm and to English people living in France. The French Government had the monopoly of tobacco manufacture within the country, and until they arranged the importation of Wills's tobacco it had been impossible to buy any cigarettes or tobacco in France other than a Government brand. The order for Bird's Eye was followed later by a request for a consignment of Three Castles.

CHAPTER TEN

CIGARETTES AND THE MACHINE

THE outstanding event in the firm's development during the 'eighties was the introduction of machine-made cigarettes. Although some brands continued to be made by hand, the purchase of several Bonsack machines made possible a development which, in the previous decade, would have seemed merely a dream.

No one contributed more to this successful enterprise than Mr. H. H. (Harry) Wills, who joined the firm in 1881. Mr. Wills—the second son of H. O. Wills the Third—was the most mechanically gifted member of the family. Educated at Clifton and at Bristol University College, he was then apprenticed to the Avonside Engineering Company. At the end of each day he would return to the Wills factory in Redcliff Street to change out of his greasy overalls and have a bath before riding home on his Norwegian pony. When he entered the family business a year or two later, he put his engineering training to the best possible use.

First he was in charge of the Fitting Shop, his staff consisting of W. Ball, Tom Setter (who was later sent to build and overhaul machinery for the firm in South Africa and China), and three labourers. In 1883 Mr. Wills became manager of the firm's export branch, known as the Virginia Cavendish Works, in Baldwin Street. But he continued to think about the factory in Redcliff Street and to ask himself whether his faith in machinery could not be applied to the growing demand for cigarettes. He decided it could. Largely because of his foresight, by the end of the year a wooden Bonsack cigarette machine had been installed at Redcliff Street. In the following year Mr. Wills went over to the Paris Exhibition and brought back another Bonsack—this time an iron model.

James Albert Bonsack was an American inventor whose story has been told in Nannie May Tilley's "The Bright-Tobacco Industry". (There is a copy of this book in the Wills Technical Library at Bedminster). An essential part of his machine was the forming tube, where the cigarette was shaped into a continuous roll. As so often happens with inventions, a preliminary mistake in construction led to ultimate success. When Bonsack had completed his specifications, a friend undertook to take them to the metal worker who was to make the parts, but the wrong instructions were given and one tube had to be re-made. Bonsack himself hastily made the crude replacement tube that proved to be the essential part of the machine. Bonsack also invented the cutting knife, which cut the roll into cigarettes of equal length. The feed was the invention of his brother, John William, who was inspired by a similar feeding device on the carding machines of the woollen

mill where the brothers worked with their father. The first Bonsack machine was patented on September 4th 1880.

Mr. Harry Wills believed in the Bonsack, though it had been rejected by other firms, and nothing would shake his faith though he was strongly opposed by his senior partners. They feared that it would never work satisfactorily; if it did, it would throw many girls out of work. Eventually Mr. Harry overcame the opposition of his colleagues by convincing them that sales would grow to such an extent that employment would actually increase. It is said that he was so sure of success that he was prepared to leave the firm if the purchase of Bonsacks was not justified. The machine was bought, subject to a royalty on production, and soon machine-made cigarettes were on the market.

It was soon obvious that Mr. Harry Wills was right. The firm's cigarette production went up rapidly, from 6,500,000 in 1884 to 9,400,000 in 1885, and 13,961,000 in 1886. By 1888 machine-made Best Bird's Eye and Gold Flake Honeydew cigarettes were selling at 7s. a thousand cheaper than hand-made cigarettes of the same brand. By November 1888 the firm had eleven Bonsack machines; by the end of 1901 twice as many. In 1904 the machines were capable of manufacturing 600 cigarettes a minute. Bonsack machines continued to be used till the Redcliff Street factory closed in 1929, though the No. 1 Factory in East Street had replaced its Bonsacks by Standards in September 1922; but this is looking ahead.

An outstanding event in the early days of machine-made cigarettes and in the history of the firm was the introduction in 1888 of Wild Woodbines. Woodbines! The word itself, with its suggestion of tranquil hours spent among country lanes and hedgerows thick with honeysuckle, was the happiest of inspirations. It is said that Mr. Frederick Wills, son of Henry Overton II and brother of Mr. E. P. Wills, was responsible both for the introduction of Wild Woodbines and for their name. He also recognised the wisdom of selling Woodbines for five a penny in paper packets. One of his sons, the future Lord Dulverton, used to hear him say: " There's magic in a penny ". William Bascombe, a former Foreman of the Cutting Room who started work in the Roll Room in the 'eighties, recalled that when Woodbines were introduced employees in all the warehouses worked overtime packing them 500 at a time. Cinderellas, another five-a-penny brand, was introduced at the same time.

Although little money was spent in advertising Woodbines, their cheapness and quality soon made them famous all over the world. In the First World War their name was literally on the lips of almost every soldier. The Reverend G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, who in his ministrations to the men in the trenches brought both spiritual inspiration and material comforts, was affectionately known to the troops as Woodbine Willie, and a small Russian cruiser which assisted in covering the troops during the Dardanelles landing in 1915 was immediately christened " The Packet of Woodbines " on account of her five funnels.

The London House, which by the end of the 'eighties had extended its premises in Holborn Viaduct, did much to promote the early sales of Woodbines. Mr. C. E. Robotham sold the first parcel in London and wired the order to Bristol the first morning they were introduced to the trade. At a meeting of the Wills travellers and staff in Bristol, Mr. W. H. Wills asked someone, " How d'you think they'll sell? " " In millions " was the reply.

It was not long after the introduction of machine-made cigarettes that means were devised for packing them. The first development was a machine for making paper cups into which cigarettes were inserted by hand. When these " case machines " were introduced, the labels that formed the packet had to be fed one at a time by hand. In 1928 an automatic feed for the labels was added.

The Handy Packer, introduced in 1902, was invented by Mr. H. H. Wills and made locally. It inserted the cigarettes into the packets that had been made by the case machine. The Handy Packer, which enabled three girls to pack 125 packets a minute, was much speedier than hand-packing. A later development of the machine enabled nine girls to pack 560 packets a minute.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PIPE DREAMS AND PROGRESS

THERE was once a man named Mr. Harrison Weir who used to dream about flowers. Perhaps that was natural, for he was a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society. But Mr. Weir also had a curious habit of dreaming about the Wills firm. One night, at his home in Kent, he dreamed that a voice said to him, " You go to Wills, the tobacco merchants, and tell them to bring out a new tobacco called ' The Double Daffodil '. Let it be rather finer than Bird's Eye ". Not only did he hear a voice, but he saw an image of the wrapper to be used. The same dream came to him regularly for six nights, and again in a month or two.

In September 1878 Mr. Weir wrote to Wills and told them about it. " The voice seemed to get very angry in time and said, ' Why don't you go? ' and the coloured wrapper grew so distinct that it is impressed on my mind. This week again the same thing happened . . . . . This week the intimation has been that if you don't take it up they will tell me who else to take it to. It is very strange, very —but now I have written I feel somewhat relieved ". Mr. Weir enclosed a sketch of the design he had seen in his vision.

The following week Mr. Weir wrote again: " Strange to say, since I wrote to you I have not had the same dream, though of late it had been most troublesome and took my attention from my profession, though I am exceedingly busy ". Towards the end of the year there was a third letter from Mr. Weir: " I have made up my mind *not* to let anyone else have it as I consider it was for you *only*, so it will rest *for ever* if you do not have it ".

Was Mr. Weir's " dream spirit " satisfied, we wonder, when eventually Wills rejected the design but accepted the name, giving it to the " Double Daffodil " brand of cut cake pipe tobacco which was on the market from 1879 till 1891?

This story, interesting in itself, is a reminder that in addition to increasing its cigarette production the firm was still going ahead with its pipe tobaccos, new as well as old. Autumn Gold, The Flower of Virginia, Leisure Hour and Fireside were all introduced at the beginning of the 'eighties. There was only one real bogey—the duty, which had risen from 3s. 2d. a pound in 1877 to 3s. 6d. in 1878. This increase was known in the trade as " the obnoxious fourpence ".

Among the tobacco manufacturers who tried hard to bring about a reduction of tax was Mr. W. H. Wills. In 1880 he was elected Liberal Member of Parliament for Coventry, which he represented till 1886. Soon after his election he wrote to Mr. Gladstone, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggesting that the

additional fourpence imposed by Disraeli's government should be abolished. Gladstone's reply was courteous but unavailing. Nor, in 1881, did he make any concession in what Arthur Bryant has called " the annual Budget, which in his hands almost achieved the popularity of a sporting event ".

Speaking in the House of Commons debate on the 1881 Budget, Mr. Wills said more than three-quarters of the duty was contributed every year by working men who bought their tobacco not by the pound but by the ounce or half-ounce. He gave figures to show that people had been smoking less during the three years after 1877. Tobacco revenue in 1881 amounted to £8,000,000.

A number of manufacturers and others interested in the tobacco trade sent a printed statement to Mr. Gladstone, pointing out that during the previous forty years the population had increased by 31 per cent, and the consumption of tobacco by 124 per cent. " Between 1840 and 1877 ", said the statement, " the country experienced every vicissitude of prosperity and adversity, good harvests and bad harvests, peace and war, high wages and low wages, and in the period of thirty-seven years there were only five solitary occasions when the home consumption of tobacco showed a decline ".

Political crises in 1885 and 1886 brought three changes of government but no change in the duty on tobacco. At first Lord Salisbury, who became Prime Minister after the Home Rule Bill had caused a split in the Liberal Party, seemed reluctant to give way to the manufacturers and their customers. In 1887, however, the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, the Government repealed "the obnoxious fourpence ", bringing the tobacco duty down again to 3s. 2d. Down went prices, too. Wills sent a circular to customers telling them of reductions in various brands. Star tobacco was advertised at 3s. 8d., Black Jack at 3s. 7d., and Old Friend at 3s. 6d. per lb. A pipe smoker could buy an ounce of Three Castles tobacco for 5½d., Bird's Eye and Gold Flake for 5d., and Westward Ho! for 4½d. The reduction in duty brought increased demand.

During this period the firm was associated with an important development in the pipe tobacco industry. In 1880 William Rose, a Lincolnshire barber and tobacconist who had been experimenting for some time with devices to supersede the necessarily slow practice of hand-packing, or of supplying retailers with tobacco in bulk, successfully designed a machine that wrapped packets mechanically. Mr. Harry Wills helped him to construct and develop this machine, and then bought it for the firm. Mr. Wills allowed Rose to use the name of Wills on his first patent specification, and W. D. & H. O. Wills bought the patent for £2,600. Rose's successful invention enabled him to move out of the attic where he had built his first machine. He erected a factory near his barber's shop in Gainsborough and founded the fortunes of the now world-famous business of Rose Brothers.

The first Rose Packing Machine produced forty-five to fifty packets a minute. An article in " Tobacco " in June 1887 said, " The new machine reduces the labour by one-half. It produces an ideal packet as every fold is excellent and the length

of packet never varies ". A girl could learn how to operate the machine in a month or two. By 1893 six Rose Packing machines had been installed for producing half-ounce and one-ounce packets.

In 1887 air-tight tins, opened by patent cutters, were introduced for pipe and cigarette brands. The freshness of the tobacco when sealed in this way was of immense value to the firm's rapidly expanding export trade. Air-tight tins of fifty Three Castles cigarettes were sold in the shops at 2s. a tin. It was by "pushing" these packings that Mr. Charles Farr helped to put Wills on the map in South Wales, where he was travelling for the firm.

Bristol customers had an opportunity of seeing more than 120 different varieties of Wills's tobacco at the Industrial and Fine Arts Exhibition of 1884. During the 'eighties the firm added to its collection of medals and diplomas. Diplomas had already been won at the London Exhibitions of 1862 and 1873. There were further diplomas at the New Zealand and Amsterdam Exhibitions of 1882 and 1883 respectively, and at the London Exhibition of 1884. And in the following year the firm received the highest award at the Antwerp International Exhibition—the Grand Diploma of Honour. Other awards were gained before the century was out at exhibitions in London and Edinburgh (1886), Melbourne and Glasgow (1888), Jamaica (1891) and Kimberley (1892). In 1897 the firm won the Grand Prize—the highest possible distinction—at the Brussels International Exhibition.

CHAPTER TWELVE

EXPORT TRADE AND THE OPENING OF A NEW FACTORY IN EAST STREET

A new factory in East Street, Bedminster, was opened in March 1886. When the premises in Redcliff Street were erected in 1869-70 it was thought that they were large enough to last the lifetime of everybody in the firm. But during the next fifteen years business increased to such an extent that more space was needed and the partners decided to build a new factory which would eventually accommodate 2,000 employees—though at that time the number barely exceeded 800. The new factory was erected on the site of Rake's Tannery. Later, in order to extend, some cottages in East Street known as Bright Bow Cottages had to be demolished. (A brand of tobacco was later named after them). The architect of the factory was Mr. Frank Wills, father of Mr. F. O. Wills.

The new building, conspicuous for its 300 foot frontage of brick and terra cotta in the neo-Gothic style, was indeed a contrast to the original building in Redcliff Street, with its latticed windows and projecting eaves. A newspaper described the new building as the finest and most complete tobacco factory in the United Kingdom. It said that each department was to have a dining room and kitchen—an innovation appreciated by those who did not live near enough to the factory to have their meals at home. The windows of the chief workrooms were glazed so that the light entered only from the north. To ensure that the factory was warm a lad was employed to maintain the steam at night during the winter. Visitors to the new factory particularly admired the layout. The Departments were so arranged that the tobacco, during the various stages of manufacture and packing, travelled by the shortest route to the Warehouse Platforms ready for loading.

To celebrate the opening of the factory the management gave a high tea and entertainment, attended by nearly 900 workpeople and their families. One who was present at this gathering on March 27th 1886 has recalled the excitement caused by the invitation to tea with " the Governors ". Some of the guests came by horse-tram, others on foot. The walls of the large Cigar Room, in which the tea was held, were draped with crimson and white cloth festooned with lace. Above the brilliant lights of the electric lamps, multi-coloured banners hung from the roof. Oil portraits of old employees were ranged round the walls, together with medals won by the firm; and on the platform was the Diploma of Honour awarded in the previous year at the Great Exhibition in Antwerp. All the heads of the firm

were present, and among the employees were Messrs. Horace Gummer, H. B. Marshall, J. Jollyman (Packing Department), W. Jollyman (London House), Charles Farr, Sam Prew, Isaac Turner, William George and E. D. Walker.

To read the newspaper reports of the opening festivities is to live for a few minutes in a vanished age. Instead of the saxophone's blare there was a solo performance of " The Lost Chord " on a cornet before the band struck up a fantasia from " The Mikado ". Instead of watching a film the audience were entertained by an exhibition of " dissolving views " on the magic lantern.

The menu at this bumper high tea is also of historical interest:

Roast Sirloins of Beef

Rounds of Beef	Corned Beef
Roast Hind Quarters Mutton	Ox tongues
Veal and Ham Pies	Pigeon pies
Roast Fillets of Veal	York Hams

Rouelle de Veau

Rhubarb Tarts	Apple Tarts
Open Jam Tarts	Blancmanges

Cheese Cakes

Tea, Cake, Buns, Brown and White Bread and Butter

Mr. W. H. Wills, who presided at the ceremony, recalled some of the features of the old Redcliff Street factory. He mentioned in particular the dark passages along which nearly everyone stumbled before the firm absorbed Bakers' corn warehouse; no philosopher in those days had ever dreamt of the electric light.

Referring to the good relations existing in the firm, Mr. Wills said there had not been a single difference worth remembering. Disputes had arisen in some districts of England because employers had too often been inclined to insist on the rights of capital and too much on the duties of labour. For his own part, he believed that many differences might be resolved if people remembered that capital had its duties and labour its rights.

Other members of the family spoke as well. Mr. George Wills expressed pleasure in the proposal to form a Glee Society; Mr. H. O. Wills was glad that he happened to be in England for such an occasion after a long absence in Norway; Mr. Frederick Wills spoke of the provision made to extend any department that might in time be found too small; Mr. Frank Wills, thanking the two contractors (Mr. A. J. Beaven and Mr. H. Sampson), prophesied the time might come when even the new factory would be inadequate; and Mr. H. H. Wills, who was one of the soloists in the entertainment, thanked the workpeople and London staff for gifts to mark his forthcoming marriage to Miss Cunliffe Owen.

EXPORT TRADE AND THE OPENING OF A NEW FACTORY IN EAST STREET

By the beginning of April 1886 the firm was already installed in the new building (now known as No. 1 Factory). Tom Setter, a former member of the Fitting Shop staff, used to recall with pride that the removal from Redcliff Street began on a Thursday night, and that by the following Monday morning all the cutting, spinning, cigarette-making machines and presses were re-erected and in working order at the new factory. Had it not been for outside help, it must be admitted the removal would have taken much longer: at that time the firm's Transport Department consisted of one man (William Henderson), one horse, and a two-wheeled van.

Overseas, the firm's trade was developing rapidly. In the year that the Bedminster factory was opened Mr. Lars Hole (a foreign representative of the firm) reported he had sold 5,272 pounds of tobacco on his visit to the West Indies and South America. On Mr. Hole's advice the firm decided to continue its branch in Hamburg. In 1887 Mr. Hole represented the firm at the Cape. During the next four years he toured Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, India and Singapore.

The growth of the firm's overseas trade reflected not only the enterprise of one particular concern but a new nationwide consciousness of the British Commonwealth—a consciousness soon to find vivid expression in the stories of a young Anglo-Indian journalist named Rudyard Kipling.

Among the 6,000 samples of tobacco on view at the opening of the new factory in 1886 were many that took people's thoughts to far corners of the world—not only to British possessions overseas but to China, Java, Greece, Japan, Turkey and all the other countries that provided tobacco leaf for the pleasure of man.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CIGARS

MANY a smoker thinks that there is nothing like a good cigar, and indeed cigars must have been one of the earliest forms of smoking tobacco, yet it was not until the Peninsular War that the cigar was introduced into this country from Spain by returning soldiers.

When cigars first appeared in the Price List, they were not of Wills manufacture, yet Wills had a spacious sale-room for cigars. A Press article in 1877, describing the Redcliff Street factory, said " Every conceivable specimen is to be found here, from the mighty Imperiales to the unpretending little Infantes, and from the fullest flavoured to the mildest quality ". Mr. H. B. Marshall was then in charge of the Cigar Room. There was also a Cigar Department at the London House.

It was not till the beginning of the eighteen-eighties that the firm began to manufacture cigars as well as sell them. The first manager of the Cigar Factory was Mr. W. J. Smith, who was succeeded after his death by his son, Mr. H. W. J. Smith. Mr. W. J. Smith had previously worked for the London cigar firm of W. G. Griffiths of High Holborn, a firm that had made most of the cigars sold by Wills. At the end of 1881 Mr. Smith came down from London to start a cigar factory for Wills in Bristol.

Mr. Smith and his cigar-makers started work early in 1882 in a room over a grocer's shop in Redcliff Street, opposite St. Mary Redcliffe church. Later they moved to a larger room over a blind shop near the original premises, then to the Bedminster factory, and finally, in 1936, to the No. 4A Factory in Raleigh Road. There were originally six apprentices, and the cigars were made by hand. (Wills did not begin to manufacture machine-made cigars till 1920). Only women and girls were employed as cigar-makers—a tradition that has been maintained. In the early days these cigar workers were the only apprentices in the firm. The last apprentice took her indentures in 1920.

Mr. Smith senior was a much-loved disciplinarian who insisted on a high standard of workmanship. A man of strong faith, he led a mid-week prayer meeting with a few members of the staff and workpeople in a room in Catherine Mead Street. But though godliness came first, the Cigar Manager was equally insistent on cleanliness and made a practice of inspecting each girl's hands before she started work. Besides making up the girls' wages and paying them out, Mr. Smith taught the girls their craft and went to endless trouble over

their training. Mr. A. J. Tucker, the foreman, assisted Mr. Smith in instructing the girls.

From its earliest days the Cigar Factory has maintained a tradition of proud independence. To talk to some of the early employees is to realise very vividly the happy atmosphere that existed in spite of conditions that were much harder than those of today. The first apprentice was Miss Rosina Clark whose indentures, taken when she was thirteen, are dated 5th January 1882. In 1949, recalling some of her early years in the factory, she said, " We were all left-handed—because Mr. Smith was—all except Lizzie Kent, who came from some other place. Mr. Tucker, the foreman, used to work in his bowler hat. All the girls thought he was bald, but he wasn't ".

One of the clauses in the indentures of each apprentice was, " She shall not contract Matrimony within the said Term, nor play at Card or Dice Tables or any other unlawful Games ". The earliest apprentices were paid a minimum of 2/- a week for the first year, rising to 6/- for the fifth; but the first year all cigar makers were put on piecework rates, and usually earned more than the apprenticeship wage for the year. When their apprenticeship was completed the workers became journey-women, and were paid the journey-women piecework rates ruling at the time.

Among the first apprentices were Rosina Clark, Clara Lewis, Ellen Gravell, Ada Braine, Alice Bowden (who later became Mrs. George Young), Mary Merrifield and Florence Headford. When Miss Mary Ann (" Polly ") Jones started her apprenticeship in 1890 at the age of thirteen, she was No. 218. Describing the independent spirit of the Cigar Factory in those days, when each apprentice, wearing an apron and a white cap, carried out the complete operation from beginning to end, selecting her own leaf and stemming it, both bunch and wrapper, and making the cigar, Miss Jones said proudly, " Every other department depended on some other department. We didn't depend on anybody ".

The heads of the firm took a keen interest in the new venture. Mr. Frederick Wills often came to watch the girls at work and talk to them. He used to refer to the workpeople in the Beating-up Room as his drawing room girls, and to those in the Cigar Factory as his nursery.

In 1887 the Cigar Factory produced a total of 5,632,101 cigars. By 1900, when the number of cigar makers had risen to 500, the total output for the year exceeded 21 millions and a flourishing export trade had been built up. Popular brands of torpedo-shaped cigars about the year 1895 included Daffodil and King Cup. Rajahs, sold at seven for 1s., were introduced in 1904. Cheroots were very popular in the 'nineties: Courts and Pickwicks were sold in the shops for a penny each.

In 1893 Wills absorbed Sales, Pollard, Lloyd & Co., a firm which, founded at the end of the Peninsular War, is said to have been the first in England to manufacture cigars. In the following year Wills also absorbed the cigar-making business

of W. G. Griffiths of High Holborn. At that time Wills had a large trade in selling cigars by the case—that is, in lots of more than 10,000 cigars.

Cigar smokers have always prided themselves on their discriminating taste. Few of them would be rash enough to punctuate each puff by reciting Kipling's phrase, " For a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke ". Yet a writer at the beginning of this century said that many a man has given as much care to the choice of a cigar as to that of a wife. In recent times, largely owing to the influence of political cartoonists, the cigar has come to be regarded as a symbol of wealth and power. But there is no necessary connexion. A week before the General Election in February 1950, a working man wrote to a national newspaper saying he preferred a small cigar to ten cigarettes. " A cigar has a nice taste ", he said, " and gives me time to think ".

Many stories are told of cigar smokers. Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher in Victorian times, shocked some of his congregation by saying, " When I have found intense pain relieved, a weary brain soothed, and calm, refreshing sleep obtained by a cigar, I have felt grateful to God, and blessed His name for it ". Replying to a correspondent who refused to believe a report of this announcement, Spurgeon said that he cultivated his flowers but burned his weeds.

Mark Twain, the American humorist, was another great cigar smoker. In the early eighteen-eighties, a man who disliked tobacco was collecting material for a book of anti-smoking propaganda. Mark Twain wrote a letter, totally against the book's purpose, saying: " I am forty-six years old and I have smoked immoderately during thirty-eight years. My health has been excellent since I was seven and remains so . . . . . I began to smoke when I was eight years old; that is, I began with one hundred cigars a month, and by the time I was twenty I had increased this allowance to two hundred a month. I think I do not smoke more than that now. I am quite sure I never smoke less ". He added: " I ordinarily smoke fifteen cigars during my five hours' labours, and if my interest reaches the enthusiastic point I smoke less. I smoke with all my might and allow no intervals". Mark Twain lived till he was seventy-five.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

HOLIDAYS, WELFARE AND THE FIRST BONUS

In 1872, more than twenty years after the original outing to the Great Exhibition, Wills employees were taken to another London Exhibition, and two years later to the Agricultural Show on Durdham Down.

In 1885 they went to Plymouth, and the Weston-Super-Mare Gazette reported that " Braving a rather rough sea, 400 of them went the Channel trip and, the majority of them being the gentler sex, they so entirely succumbed before the rough treatment of Father Neptune that of the 400 only twenty saw the Eddystone. They recovered, however, in time for dinner ".

More than sixty years later several pensioners, including the late George Young and Rosina Clark, could still give a vivid description of this eventful day, and their reports cast some doubt about the holiday makers' appetites for dinner. " I was sea-sick ", confessed Miss Clark; and Mr. Young talked sadly of the chicken, pork and jellies left uneaten because of the rough seas.

A typical Wills outing at the end of the 'eighties began with the employees trooping to Temple Meads Station at six or seven in the morning, with the newly-formed Wills Workpeople's Band playing a lively air down Victoria Street. Then there was the gathering on the platform, where the men were already enjoying a pipe of Heartsease or Three Castles while the girls moved about in a chattering flutter of mirth and muslin; Sam Prew, the genial and fatherly foreman, going from one compartment to another with tea, coffee, cream and sandwiches; the " smoking train " that brought the excursionists through Mendip valleys and the deep, ferny coombes of Devon, past ancient parks and rose-embowered cottages; the arrival at the seaside, the welcome by the local mayor, and the walk down streets and esplanades lined with cheering townspeople and festooned with streamers; the lunch, presided over by a member of the Wills family; then, in the afternoon, expeditions on land or water, some people driving in four-in-hand drags or brakes along Devonshire lanes, others taking a trip in a steamer or lazing on the beach; the feast of the day—tea, in a monster marquee where one of the partners would review the achievements of the past year; rounders, kiss-in-the-ring and dancing in the meadows during the early evening; and at last the long and lively journey home when, as the train puffed through the darkness at forty miles an hour, people at wayside stations were startled by the sound of song, glee, catch and rousing chorus from a train in which fifty or sixty passengers were standing up at the same time in the saloon, waving hats and singing

"For they are jolly good fellows", in response to the toast of "Success to the firm".

The quantities of food consumed on these outings was quite staggering by present-day standards. When the firm went to Minehead in 1887 the organisers provided a large furniture van laden with joints and poultry, pies and puddings, strawberries and Devonshire cream, a camp kitchen, and 2,000 plates, knives and forks. There was also a company of forty waiters.

At the Minehead outing Mr. George Wills, referring to the new dining room and refreshment club at Bedminster, said that in the previous week 3,309 tickets had been sold, of which number 2,800 had been for tea, cocoa and coffee. Two years later, at Sidmouth, Mr. George Wills said that although the Dining Club and Refreshment Society was not self-supporting, it was making good progress. During 1888 it had supplied 196,000 cups of tea, coffee and cocoa, and had sold 72,000 penny tickets. It had provided 6,500 dinners, from 3d. to 5d. a head, and had taken £686. A new and improved tariff he said, was soon to be brought out.

A typical menu for the dining room at that time was :—

Meat Pie, Potatoes and Vegetables	3d.
Bacon (large rasher)	1d.
Bread and Butter (thick slice)	½d.
Plum Cake (1 lb.)	3d.
Tea, Coffee, Cocoa (three cups)	1d.
Lemonade (large size bottle)	1d.

An amusing incident which took place during the outing to Sidmouth in 1889 is a reminder of the difference in dress between those days and our own age. Because of the great heat Mr. Frank Wills (the architect) felt he ought to buy a new Gladstone collar. He walked into a shop and laid his collar on the counter as a specimen of what he wanted. He was a little taken aback when the shopkeeper said that when he had such a large piece of linen he usually made a suit of clothes with it.

About this time women were beginning to smoke cigarettes. Thomas Hardy's novel " The Woodlanders ", published in 1887, contains a description of the visit of a doctor to a country house where a young woman was learning the art. " Between the fingers of her right hand she held a cigarette, while she idly breathed from her delicately curled lips a thin stream of smoke towards the ceiling ". The custom was referred to by Mr. H. H. Wills at the Tenby outing in 1890. Hearty male laughter mingled with coy feminine titters when he said he believed that women had " ventured to indulge, in the seclusion of their apartments, in those little dainties which his firm had been putting before them for years ". There was even more laughter when he continued: " That is a matter which every English woman must settle in her own conscience, and if she were married she must settle it between herself and her husband ".

The growing number of employees was another favourite subject for comment during the tea-time speeches at these outings. At Weymouth in 1886 Mr. Frederick Wills, referring to the factory that had been built at Bedminster since the previous year's outing, ventured the remark that still further accommodation would be needed before long. In the following year Mr. E. P. Wills told the workpeople that if the numbers were maintained the firm would ask the railway company to provide *two* trains for future outings.

Year by year the number of excursionists increased: 500 to Plymouth in 1885, 750 to Teignmouth in 1888, 940 to Sidmouth in 1889, and more than a thousand in three Special Bird's Eye Expresses to Tenby in 1890.

At the Sidmouth outing in 1889 Mr. George Wills said that they had found a house at Clevedon—Grove Lodge—suitable for use as a sanatorium for employees. This was the firm's first convalescent home. In making this announcement Mr. Wills thanked the workpeople for the way which they themselves had helped their more needy friends in Bristol, and he mentioned that employees' subscriptions to medical charities in 1888 had amounted to £75.

It was in the same year that Mrs. Leach, a clergyman's widow, was appointed to look after the welfare of the girls and women employed by the firm. She was one of the first women factory welfare officers in this country.

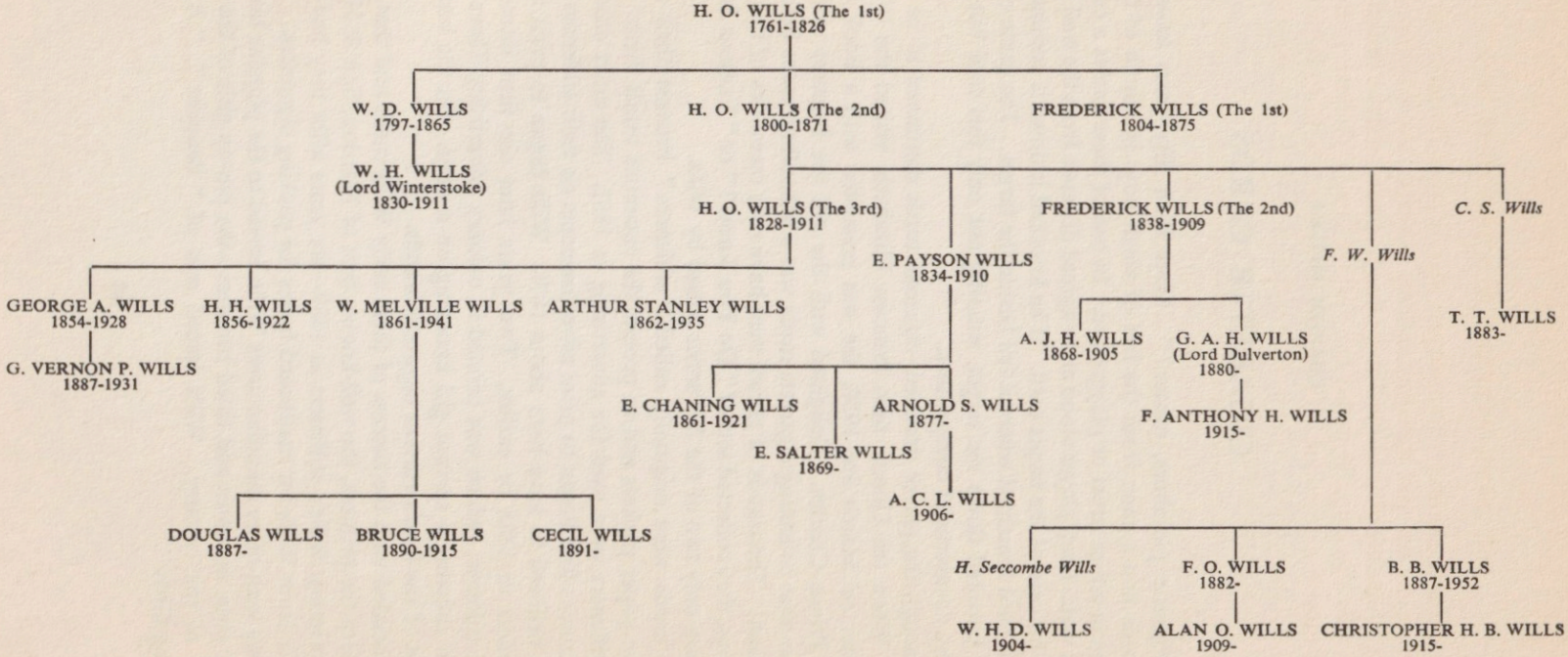
News about wages, hours of work and holidays figure largely in the record of the period between 1880 and 1900. In 1889 wages at Bedminster and the Virginia Cavendish Works were inceased by 10% and it was decided that a percentage of the firm's profits should be distributed as a bonus to every employee in proportion to his or her earnings during the year. This bonus, which rose from 11% in 1889 to 40% in 1900, superseded the previous bonus of 1s. per thousand lbs. of leaf cleared for manufacture. In 1891 the wages of the girls in the Beating-up Room were increased by 6d. to 10/6d. In the same year the factory hours were reduced from 7 a.m.—7 p.m. to 8 a.m.—6 p.m.

In 1886 a week's holiday with pay was granted to foremen in all departments, and the Workpeople's Savings Bank was formed. (This was the forerunner of the Wills Savings Bank or Provident Club, established in 1890). In 1891 the annual week's holiday already granted to foremen was extended to all employees.

"We have pleasure in informing you that instead of the usual outing we have decided to grant annually to our employees in the Bedminster and Redcliff Street works a week's holiday with a week's wages", said the notice signed by the firm's directors on May 8th of that year. The last paragraph read: "We hope that our employees will reap the full advantages of this arrangement by endeavouring, as far as possible, to obtain change of air and scene, and trust that thereby the health and happiness of all will be promoted".

W. D. & H. O. WILLS

Members of the Wills Family who took an active part in the business between 1786 and 1952



Names of Members of the Wills Family not directly associated with W. D. & H. O. Wills are shown in italics

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CIGARETTE CARDS

" ANY c'g'rette pickshurs, mister? " More than fifty years have passed since these words first sprang from the lips of small boys in search of cigarette cards for games in either street or playground. In one of these games a card was placed against a wall. Each player stood at an agreed distance from the wall and "pegged" (flicked) his card at the target card. If he knocked it down it became his property; if not, his card remained where it fell beside the target. The game continued until a player knocked down the target, winning not only this card but all the others thrown by unsuccessful competitors.

Although the games declined, cigarette cards continued to be collected as a hobby. When the Queen, then Princess Elizabeth, visited the Wills factory at Bedminster on March 3rd 1950, she was presented with a book containing six sets for Prince Charles. Delighted with the gift the Princess said, " I seem to remember that collecting cigarette cards was a schoolboy craze before the War ". Yes, indeed! Thousands of grown men have rosy memories of the days when, as schoolboys, they collected sets of " Do You Know? " or " Famous British Liners ", to mention only two of the 200 series issued by Wills.

The cards were originally called " stiffeners " because their object was to stiffen the paper packets and so protect the cigarettes inside them. In the United States stiffeners were used for advertising in 1882. The exact date when British manufacturers first began to print advertisements on their stiffeners is not known, but it is believed to have been about 1878. Wills began to print advertisements on stiffeners in 1888 or earlier. Two years later the firm introduced its first pictorial stiffener, (which was printed in colour), advertising Three Castles cigarettes and showing a servant girl knocking on a door. On the back of the card was a list of the firm's current cigarette brands.

Associated with the success of these early Wills cards and that of many later issues, were the printers, the well-known firm of Mardon, Son & Hall. Mardons started printing Wills's stiffeners in 1889—six years after they had received their first order from Wills for cardboard boxes for packing cigarettes.

Along with other manufacturers Wills bowed to the popular taste for pictures of pretty girls, actresses and titled beauties—the pin-up girls of the young men at the end of the century. Wills issued sets of " Beauties ", " Actresses " and " Dancing Girls ".

Wills began issuing " general interest " sets in 1895, with " Ships " and " Soldiers ". Several variations of these sets appeared. They contained the first Wills cigarette cards in the form in which people now remember them. In 1896 came " Cricketers ". There was also an issue of four picture postcards with an advertisement printed on the left-hand side of each card.

It was about this time that Wills began to issue sets with subjects bearing closely on national history. The Diamond Jubilee series of " Kings and Queens of England " was immediately popular, and is still regarded as one of the cigarette card classics. A set of these cards, specially printed on satin was presented to Queen Victoria. The brief historical notes on the backs of the cards foreshadowed the full descriptive texts that became general later.

Besides recording great national events cigarette cards were also a commentary on the times, reflecting social customs, such as cycling in the 'nineties, and the type of humour in vogue. A good example was the popular series of " Double Meaning Sayings ", introduced in 1898. This set consisted of 52 stiffeners, each numbered by means of a miniature playing card printed in the corner. One card bore the title " A safety match ", and showed two cyclists racing. Other subjects in the same vein were, " The dark side of nature ", (a negro), " Brothers in arms " (a nurse holding two babies), " A model wife " (a husband painting her), " A pair of slippers " (two skaters), and " His Honour at steak " (a judge eating a hearty meal).

During the Boer War the six " Transvaal " sets issued by Wills, recording the progress of the campaigns and the movements of the commanding officers, performed a valuable public service at a time when the daily newspapers contained no photographs transmitted by wireless.

Seven small brass medallions were also issued with Wills cigarettes during the Boer War. The medallions were slightly larger than silver threepenny bits and were fitted with rings for fastening to a watch chain. In 1949 Mr. Fred Phillips, of the Cigarette Making Room at No. 4 Factory, dug up one of these discs in his allotment. One side bore the head and shoulders of a soldier wearing a roughrider hat, with the inscription " Colonel Baden-Powell, The Hero of Mafeking ". On the reverse side were the words, " W. D. & H. O. Wills Limited: Wills Gold Flake Cigarettes and Tobacco ".

Other discs portrayed Queen Victoria (whose death in 1901 was marked by the black border around one of the " Transvaal " sets of cigarette cards), Lord Roberts, Lord Kitchener, General Sir George White, General Sir Redvers Buller, and Major-General French. Various brands were advertised on the backs of the discs.

Before the British American Tobacco Company was formed in 1902 Wills issued a number of foreign sets, most of which differed in design from those issued at home though some sets were issued both at home and abroad with different backs. Australia and New Zealand were served by the Wills associate company in

Australia with the " Maori " series (1900-05), the numerous " Australian Cricketers ", and other sets. When the British American Tobacco Company later took over the export business of the Imperial Company's branches they also took over the issue of cigarette cards abroad.

The first decade of the present century brought an increasing number of new sets. The material for two of these—" Footballers " and " Cricketers "—was written by Mr. Archie Powell, of the " Western Daily Press ". The " Vanity Fair " series, which ran to three sets, consisted of cartoons by " Spy ", and included one of Mr. W. H. Wills (Lord Winterstoke) with frock coat and gloves, looking rather like King Edward VII. " Vanity Fair " was a Victorian Society magazine, and " Spy " was a caricaturist whose name is still remembered.

The designs for the various sets were drawn with the greatest care, and accurate information on the subjects was obtained from such sources as the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. Mr. Heber Mardon, in " Landmarks in the History of a Bristol Firm ", (Mardon, Son & Hall, 1918) referred with justifiable pride to the first series of " Roses " printed by his firm in 1912. Many competent judges considered that no better colour printing of a small card had ever been produced. " There are many different colours used ", wrote Mr. Mardon, " and each colour must have the most perfect register. We have orders for immense numbers at a time, and these orders have often been repeated for a popular series ".

Two Wills sets had to be withdrawn when the First World War was declared. " Waterloo ", depicting the Peninsular War and the downfall of Napoleon, was to have been issued after August 1914. Since it would have been tactless to remind the French allies of this previous defeat, the issue was cancelled. Even so, a few lucky people possess the " Waterloo " set. Among these is a Wills pensioner, Mr. F. H. Pritchard, whose valuable collection dates back to his boyhood. The other set to be withdrawn in 1914 was the second issue of " Musical Celebrities ", the first of which had appeared in 1912. Again the reasons for withdrawal were patriotic. Cards depicting German and Austrian artistes were replaced by cards showing Allied celebrities. Twenty-two years later, after the abdication of King Edward VIII, the firm similarly withdrew a series of fifty cards they had prepared showing outstanding events in his life. All these sets are now collectors' treasures.

Sets produced during the 1914-18 War included a set of twelve reproductions of recruiting posters, issued in 1915 before conscription was introduced, and a set of " National Flags of the Allies ", cut out to fit into the buttonhole. Paper shortage stopped production of cards in 1917; the last set issued, in November of that year, was " Gems of French Architecture ".

It was not until 1922 that cigarette cards were issued again. The first set, in September of that year, was " Do You Know? " a general knowledge series which was immensely popular among schoolboys. Three more sets in this series were issued in the next eleven years.

Between 1928 and 1930 three sets of particularly large educational cards were issued, depicting " The British Empire ", " Cities of Britain " and " Industries of Britain ". These cards, which were also issued to schools on request, were valuable aids to teachers. Other interesting sets were the three series of " real photographs " —" Round Europe ", " Homeland Events " and " British Sporting Personalities ".

A third set of " Cinema Stars " appeared in 1931. This series presented stills from films of the day, among them being " Young Woodley " (from the play by John van Druten), with Frank Lawton and Madeleine Carroll. Three years later Wills issued the first set of " Radio Celebrities ".

In March 1930 Wills introduced a new form of stiffener—a set of 48 sectional cards which, when put together, formed a picture. In all Wills issued six different sets of these sectional cards with Gold Flake and Capstan cigarettes, and each full set of stiffeners could be exchanged for a reproduction, suitable for framing, of the original picture. The pictures were " The Laughing Cavalier ", " The Boyhood of Raleigh ", " Between Two Fires ", " The Toast ", " Mother and Son " and " And When Did You Last See Your Father ? "

This scheme continued for two years. It was followed in 1932 by the issue of miniature playing cards in packets of Gold Flake, Capstan and Star cigarettes. The miniature cards could be exchanged for full-size playing cards or, if a number of complete packs were sent in, for bridge sets, card tables, bezique sets, and copies of a specially compiled book on popular card games.

In November 1932 Wills introduced a new brand of cigarettes—Four Aces—which contained in place of stiffeners coupons exchangeable for a variety of gifts. During the operation of the scheme, from November 1932 until April 1934, more than three million gifts were despatched to smokers in return for these coupons.

Among the outstanding issues of cigarette cards during the 1930's were " The Reign of King George V " (1935), the Coronation series " Our King and Queen " (1937) and " The King's Art Treasures ", issued in 1938 by permission of King George VI. Both the King and Queen Mary accepted presentation albums containing this series, one of the finest ever produced in this country. Sets such as these, characterised by careful research and high-quality colour printing, were virtually illustrated " reference books ".

During the years before World War II Wills issued two sets of cigarette cards in association with Government Departments—" Safety First " (Ministry of Transport, 1934) and " Air Raid Precautions " (Home Office, 1938). " Life in the Royal Navy " was issued in July 1939. The last Wills set before the issue of cigarette cards was suspended at the beginning of the war was the second series of " Association Footballers ".

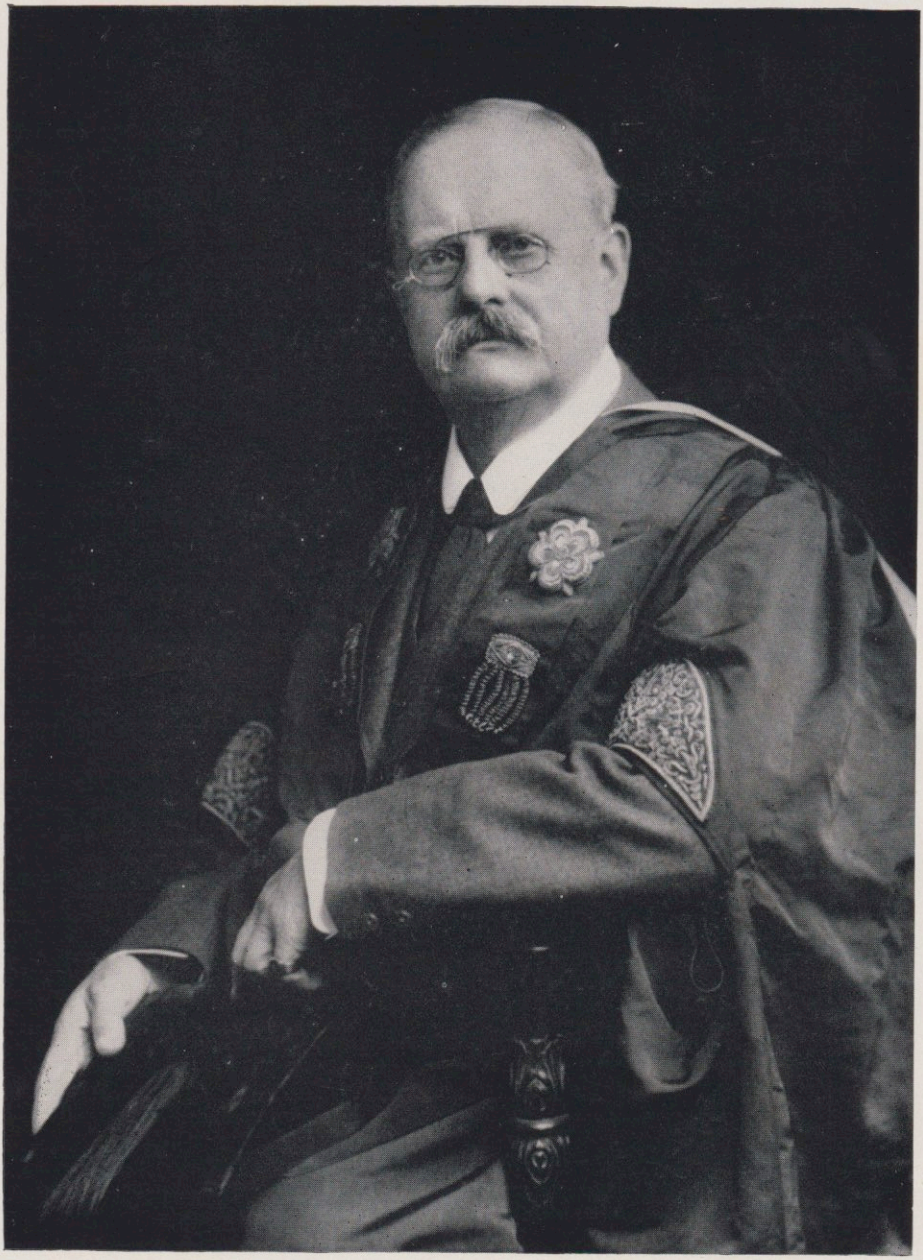
More than once the accuracy of the drawings and descriptions on Wills cigarette cards has been put to practical use. Once the prosecution in a police court case produced two cards from the " Fish and Bait " series to show there was

a considerable difference in the appearance of a salmon and that of a pike. On another occasion a film company, needing accurate information for an historical production, used a set of Wills's " English Period Costumes " for reference.

Mention has already been made of the album of cigarette cards presented to Princess Elizabeth for Prince Charles. The album contained six series of cards with hand-painted sketches in water-colours at the bottom of each page. These were the sets included: The " Reign of King George V " (1935), " Life in the Royal Navy" (1939), " Dogs " (1937), " Famous British Liners " (1935), "Animals and their Furs " (1930), and " Railway Equipment " (1939). On one of the pages of " Life in the Royal Navy " was a sketch of the destroyer H.M.S. Chequers, the ship in which the Duke of Edinburgh was serving when the presentation was made. A sketch at the foot of the first page of " Dogs " showed the Princess in " The Little House " presented to her by the Welsh nation on her sixth birthday in 1932. One of the sketches in " Railway Equipment " was of Engine No. 6201, the G.W.R. King class locomotive " Princess Elizabeth ".

The presentation album, together with a book illustrating the cultivation of the tobacco plant and showing processes of manufacture, was prepared by Mardon, Son & Hall. Both books were bound in blue morocco and decorated with gold.

This was not the first time the Wills firm had presented cigarette cards to a member of the Royal Family. When King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the Bedminster factory as Duke and Duchess of York in 1927 they were given an album of cigarette cards—for Princess Elizabeth herself, then little more than a baby.



SIR GEORGE A. WILLS, BART.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED

If a novel were to be based on the history of the House of Wills, a suitable subtitle for the first section would be " Father and Sons "; for the second " Cousins and Nephews ". In 1884, when Mr. W. H. Wills was Chairman of the firm, he was assisted by his cousins (Mr. H. O. Wills the third, Mr. Edward Payson Wills and Mr. Frederick Wills) and his nephews (Mr. George Alfred Wills, Mr. Henry Herbert Wills and Mr. Walter Melville Wills, sons of Mr. H. O. Wills the third).

Mr. W. H. Wills (1830-1911)—later Sir William Henry Wills, Bt., and finally Lord Winterstoke—had a particularly long association with the firm, beginning in 1847 and ending only with his death in 1911, when he was in his eighty-first year. His kindly, benevolent nature is evident in the portrait, now in the Bristol Museum, by Paul Riviére. He was three times a Member of Parliament. When he returned to Bristol after his election as Liberal Member for Coventry in 1880 he made immediately for the factory in Redcliff Street, where the first congratulations offered to him were those of his own employees. No sooner was it known that he was back at the factory than workmen from all parts of the building ran to the galleries in the entrance hall and greeted him with ringing cheers.

In 1894 he became Liberal Member of Parliament for East Bristol, and in 1895 he was returned again for the same ward, serving for a further period of five years. There are still some who remember " W.H. " addressing lunch-hour meetings from his carriage at Bedminster and Ashton Gate during the two latter election campaigns, and, in his old age, chatting to the people on his estate at Blagdon, where he was much loved. Others picture him at staff gatherings when, less asleep than he sometimes appeared to be, he would startle everybody by exclaiming, " What's that ? What's that ? "

It is not so widely known that, in spite of his powerful physique and twinkling eyes, an illness in his youth was so serious that he had to give up all thoughts of the career he had chosen. When captain of Mill Hill School he looked forward to going to the Bar. Instead of allowing disappointment to warp him when this ambition had to be abandoned, he learned his father's business with the tenacity of a man who has made up his mind to adapt himself to unalterable circumstance.

Mr. H. O. Wills the Third (1828-1911)—father of George, Harry and Melville —was the loyal subject of five monarchs. Born in the reign of George the Fourth, he died in the year of George the Fifth's coronation. Substantial in build and

beard, H.O. is remembered as a very good-looking man. Before ill-health forced him to spend long periods in Norway, he gave many years' service to the firm. Mr. H. O. Wills was a shy man—so shy that he did not often go into the factory except at night. He was meticulous in his attention to detail. He once sat up all night in the office looking for a fivepenny error in the ledger. That, perhaps, is the reason why he produced a bottle of champagne when John Gummer, the firm's fine accountant, was the first to balance the ledger in a single evening !

Sir Edward Payson Wills, Bt., (1834-1910), joined the firm in its Mary-le-Port Street days; he lived to become a director of the Imperial Tobacco Company. He would drive to the office from his house in Sneyd Park in a carriage and pair. Once, when he offered himself for election to the City Council, his coachman was so drunk that " E.P. " had to put him inside and drive the carriage home himself. " E.P. " was an unobtrusive man, with unfailing courtesy and good humour.

Sir Frederick Wills, Bt., (1838-1909), fourth son of H. O. Wills the Second and the father of Lord Dulverton, had great business capacity as well as public spirit. Immensely interested in the work of the factory, he would often stove tobacco himself. At these times he would not be interrupted. If a visitor called he had to leave a note and wait till " Mr. Fred " had finished stoving. He was very popular with his employees. Not long ago a pensioner recalled as typical of Sir Frederick an occasion when one of the workpeople was having trouble with his teeth and Mr. Fred suggested he should go to a certain dentist. " Tell him to take them out and make you a double set ", said Mr. Fred. He added, " And tell them to send the bill to me ".

Another story, which illustrates the relationship between Sir Frederick Wills and his employees, is told by his son, Lord Dulverton. As a young man, Lord Dulverton was chatting to one of the old employees in the snuff-making room when the latter asked, " And how is Master Freddie ? " He paused a moment. " But there ", he added, " I suppose I should call him *Mr.* Freddie now he be a baronet ".

" Mr. Fred " talked with great power and purpose once he had warmed to his subject, especially the subject of tobacco. Once, in the House of Commons, he was able to correct the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Austen Chamberlain) on a technical point about tobacco strips: and, speaking about tobacco duty, Mr. Wills neatly adapted a phrase of Conan Doyle's by saying that what was morally wrong could never be politically right. He received his baronetcy in 1897.

Mr. George Alfred Wills (1854-1928), later Sir George Wills, Bt., became general manager of the firm when Sir Frederick Wills went to the London House. He proved himself a fine leader as well as an uncommonly good manufacturer, and was a particularly good judge of leaf.

In January 1926, only a year or two before he died, an Oxford Convocation visited Sir George at his home—Burwalls, Leigh Woods—to confer on him the

honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law. In his presentation speech the President of Magdalen (then Sir Herbert Warren) referred not only to Sir George's gift of Nightingale Valley, Leigh Woods, Bristol, to the City, and his donations to the University of Bristol, but also to the great business that he and his forefathers had built. It must have afforded particular pride to Sir George when he heard the President of Magdalen mention several well-known Wills brands. The speech was in Latin: here is a translation of the relevant passage: " The well-known ' Nicotiana ' weed has at times been forbidden and banished by the universities, but how many university men are there now who shun it ? Every small boy, every ' bobbed flapper ' can reel off the names of the various kinds of this herb and especially of those specimens the fibres of which are rolled up in tiny cylinders for smoking. Of these kinds none is better known than those whose quality and whose names alike are their effective advertisement—Three Castles, Bird's Eye, Gold Flake, Honeydew, Cut Golden Bar, Woodbines, Autographs, and I dare say others whose titles are even more alluring ".

Mr. Henry Herbert Wills (1856-1922), already mentioned in the course of this history for his skill as an engineer and for the important part he played in introducing cigarette machines and air-tight tins, has been appropriately described by a former employee as " a fighter ". Despite a retiring disposition which deterred him from taking much part in public affairs till comparatively late in life, he expressed his opinion firmly and even with obstinate tenacity when he was convinced he was right; and more than once his visionary ideas, at first unpopular with some of his colleagues, had commercially successful results.

Among Mr. H. H. Wills's inventions was the Handy Packer for cigarettes (mentioned in an earlier chapter) and he contributed to the invention of the Rose Packing Machine. One of the ingenious devices patented by him was a cigarette box containing a tray which, when the lid was raised, shot out to reveal a display of cigarettes.

The adjective " retiring ", appropriate to several members of the Wills family, cannot be applied to Mr. Walter Melville Wills (1861-1941), fifth son of H. O. Wills the Third. Melville Wills was, in truth, a " character ". With a little imagination one can see him stepping out of the novels of Fielding or Dickens. Mr. F. O. Wills once heard him say, " When you get a hundred pounds, it always costs you a hundred and twenty to live ". In his early days he rode to business on horseback. Later he was one of the pioneers of motor-cycling; there are still people who can remember the fearsome machine he used to leave every day in the hall at the Bedminster factory.

Soon after joining the firm in 1887 Mr. Melville Wills, who shone at figures and was trained as an accountant, introduced new systems of discounting and book-keeping. When he became head of the sales side of the business he had a habit of writing comments in the salary books each year. Some of these remarks, entered in 1891, read like a headmaster's report on his pupils. " Does all he can

and does well "; " Get rid of unless he improves "; and " A good worker and stops late ". The most cryptic and suggestive of these entries is " £10 and talk to ". Entries for 1892 are no less piquant. Of one employee he wrote: " Improved. Writing not good enough for invoices ". Other comments were: " Most willing—try to improve writing "; " Not very brilliant but steady and plodding "; and " Late at opening letters ".

Mr. Arthur J. Hamilton Wills (1868-1905), eldest son of Sir Frederick Wills, was one of the kindest and most unaffected of men and was well liked by his staff at the London House. It was largely through his efforts that the snuff-manufacturing business of Sales, Pollard, Lloyd & Company of London was acquired by W. D. & H. O. Wills in 1893. As a memento of this transaction he was presented with two chairs that came from the Sales, Pollard firm—chairs in which the two great statesmen Pitt the Younger and Fox had smoked their pipes together. Mr. Arthur, as he was popularly known, came to the Redcliff Street factory in 1899. He identified himself with the social as well as the business side of the firm and was a member of the Madrigal Society.

In 1886 the management of the firm was divided as follows: Mr. E. P. Wills —responsible for offices and travellers; Mr. Frederick Wills—responsible for the London House and leaf buying; Mr. G. A. Wills, responsible for the Bedminster Factory and leaf buying for home and export trade—for home trade with Mr. Frederick Wills and for export trade with Mr. H. H. Wills, manager of the Virginia Cavendish (Export) Works.

There were " characters " in plenty among the employees no less than among the employers. The staff in the middle of the 'eighties included William Jollyman, manager of the London House and later managing director of Cope Brothers of Liverpool; his brothers James (father of F. W. Jollyman, at one time the Wills chemist and later chief chemist at the Head Office of the Imperial Tobacco Company); Henry B. Marshall, manager of the Redcliff Street factory; F. J. Schwalm, (in charge of the office at the Virginia Cavendish Works, and later with the British American Tobacco Company before returning to Wills at Ashton Gate); the brothers Eyles—Edward (traveller in Yorkshire) and George (office staff); Fred Palmer, a much-liked man who was the first secretary of the firm when it became a limited company; and W. J. R. Cahill, traveller in Devon and Cornwall.

Horace Gummer and Harry Hambly were, at different times, in charge of the Counting House, and each had a strong outside interest. For Horace Gummer this was the Church, of which he was a great benefactor. He founded a Clergy Holiday Fund with 2,500 Ordinary Shares in the Imperial Tobacco Company. In 1930 (the year before his death) the income from this source provided holidays for 56 incumbents and 14 curates. At Horace Gummer's funeral service the Bishop of Bristol described him as " the very essence of unselfishness", with the " mind of a man and the heart of a little child ". Harry Hambly delighted in water-colour

painting. At Christmas he used to give a " one man show ", when many of the staff would buy his pictures to give away as presents.

Another well-remembered employee was E. E. Jones who, joining the firm at a time when the staff of the Invoice Office was only four, became traveller in the Nottingham district, where he used to call on the Player brothers in their shop. Later " Teddy " Jones travelled in the Birmingham district. At the annual staff dinner he was always called on to sing " Boys of the Old Brigade ". When he retired in 1926 after 51 years' service Mr. F. H. Fleming suggested that if Mr. Jones were X-rayed, on his spine would be found the word " Woodbine ", on his right arm " Gold Flake ", on his left arm " Three Castles ", on his right leg " Capstan ", on his left leg " Westward Ho ! "—but across his heart would be imprinted the phrase " W. D. & H. O. Wills ".

The chairman at this presentation ceremony to Teddy Jones was the late Charles Farr, who lived to celebrate his ninety-third birthday on April 4th 1952. Mr. Farr was then the firm's senior pensioner by many years. When he joined Wills in 1875 there were four travellers attached to the Bristol staff, four employees in the Counting House and General Office, and three in the Invoice and Despatch Department. The travellers were the Griffin brothers, T. H. Cundy and R. G. Tippetts.

At ninety-three Mr. Farr could still remember many stories about his early days with the firm. As a young man he often had commissions to carry out for the partners—up to the Haymarket by St. James's to superintend the weighing of hay for Mr. E. P. Wills's horses; into the city to pay a few bills; down to Avonmouth to see what progress had been made in refitting Mr. H. O. Wills's yacht, the *Assegai*. He had to spend so much time taking furnishings and equipment from the yacht to Mr. Wills's house at Redland Knoll that Charlie persuaded his father to let him have a horse and cart—an idea that pleased Mr. Wills so much that he told his gardener to give Charlie the biggest bunch of grapes possible.

Once young Charlie persuaded West, the doorkeeper at Bedminster, to try wearing roller skates for his journey round the factory. On another occasion Charlie hooked the " returned goods " file to the tail of West's frock coat—a garment worn by doorkeepers as well as travellers. Often in hot water himself, young Farr was quick to rescue others from awkward situations. Once he was taking stock with " Old John ", an employee of mature years, when John skipped out for a drink or two. He may even have had three, for his coming back was merrier than his going out. Suddenly the two men heard the steps of one of the partners on the stairs. Charlie persuaded John to climb into a snuff bin; and there he remained, till the danger was over.

In 1882, after seven years in the offices, Charles Farr was given his chance as representative in North Wales. He was twenty-three—the youngest traveller the firm had ever sent out. Later he succeeded Mr. Cundy in South Wales. On one occasion Mr. Farr's horse shied, knocking down a man and breaking his leg.

Instead of going to hospital the man went to a blacksmith, for the leg was a wooden one.

Once when Mr. Farr drove his horse and trap to Gilfach Goch, a Welsh village near Bridgend, he found all the shops closed because of a funeral—a custom then regularly observed in South Wales. A wasted journey ? Not at all. Seeing the funeral procession approaching, Mr. Farr joined it and found himself walking alongside a grocer named Watkins who was a customer of Wills. Speaking under his breath but still looking suitably solemn, Mr. Farr asked his companion for a tobacco order. Though the melancholy Watkins did not want anything he was eventually so worn down by Mr. Farr's persistence that he agreed to take a box, saying that Mr. Farr could make it up as he liked. After that, Mr. Frederick Wills invariably greeted Mr. Farr at travellers' meetings with the remark, " Been to a funeral lately ? "

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MORE PERSONALITIES

A MERRY face, a fringe beard, and rotund but agile body: those were the outward characteristics of Sam Prew, the foreman—one of the finest employees the firm has ever had.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Wills was his life. Living on the premises, he was the first to enter the factory in the morning and the last to leave at night. He knew the processes of manufacture of all the firm's products, and his position in the 'eighties was virtually that of a factory manager. He deputised for Mr. George Wills when he was away and eventually succeeded Mr. George and Mr. Frederick Wills as the chief judge of leaf. Often when leaf was bought he interviewed the brokers who came to Bristol with their samples.

When Sam Prew died in 1892, after thirty years as foreman, the factory was closed to allow people to go to his funeral. To the staff and workpeople who attended there must have come a train of memories: Sam on the outings, a smile on his face and a coffee-pot in his hands; Sam skipping up the stairs at the Redcliff Street factory; Sam the disciplinarian rebuking someone for careless work; Sam attending meetings with the management after lunch and giving his forthright opinion of the work in the Cutting Room. The firm erected a stone over Sam Prew's grave; but his best memorial is the respect and affection with which he is still remembered at Wills sixty years after his death.

Among the workpeople who retired at the beginning of the eighteen-nineties were Elizabeth Chilcott, (who came to Wills in 1842 and who turned the wheel of her mother's spinning machine), Isaac Turner (warehouse packer), Elizabeth West (leaf sorter), and Emma Watkins (roll spinner). Henry Stallard, who succeeded J. Stidson as Foreman of the Stripping Leaf Room at Redcliff Street, died in 1881 after forty years' service. Other well-known employees during the last twenty years of the century were Jenny Braine, Martha Cogan and James Shipway.

Many men and women whose names are familiar to present-day employees began their association with the firm in the 'eighties. George Young, later Foreman of the Tobacco Stores, joined Wills in 1884. He worked in the Cigarette Room at Redcliff Street and was packer and stock-taker in the warehouse at Bedminster when Woodbines were introduced. George was a quick-witted lad, eager to make himself useful. Among other things he learned to use decimals, worked the lift, carried tobacco, and descended to the cellar under the pavement at Redcliff Street to bring up bottles of wine for the firm's dinners. In 1949, less than a year before

his death, George Young could still talk eloquently about those distant days—about Sam Veale and his brother Sidney, who was so fond of fishing; about Sam Skidmore, who tied up the boxes in the warehouse—" Trampledaisy " they called him because of his small feet; about old John Powell, the carpenter who worked out the engineering patterns for Mr. Harry Wills. George even started singing a song that was popular with the Glee Society:

" She's a sweet rustic damsel that everyone knows
With a Roman-shaped eye and a cast in her nose."

Another " old-timer " who joined the firm as a boy in the 'eighties was William Bascombe, later Foreman of the Cutting Room. " Got your characters?" asked Mr. Bell, Foreman of the Cutting Room when young Bascombe called at the Redcliff Street Factory in 1884 to ask for a job. " No, Sir ", he replied: and he ran all the way from Redcliff Street to Barton Hill to get his characters—one from the Superintendent of the Sunday School, one from the schoolmaster, and his birth certificate. William Bascombe started work in the Roll Room. One errand he remembered as a youth was being sent to take a rug to Mr. W. H. Wills, then a director of the Great Western Railway, when setting out on a journey. " Look sharp ! " said Mr. Wills good-humouredly, giving young Bascombe a threepenny bit. " Back to your work ! "

The way to get " a rise " in those days was to waylay one of the partners. William Bascombe applied this method successfully when he lay in wait for Mr. George Wills. Later he was transferred to the warehouse to learn packing, and there he stayed for many years. Two of his youthful interests were cycling and cricket. Cycling in the 'nineties was as popular a recreation as " hiking " at the beginning of the nineteen-thirties. At week-ends the Wills employees, like H. G. Wells's Mr. Polly, would set off in their brown Norfolk jackets and breeches for bicycle rides along the lanes of Gloucestershire and Somerset. The cricket club played on the site of the present Nos. 3 and 4 factories. Cricket balls were often lost—and as they cost three and sixpence each, cricket was not the cheapest of pastimes.

George Godfrey began work in the Cutting Room at Redcliff Street in 1883 and became a cutter before he was sixteen; in fact he was allowed to go on the Minehead outing only because he was doing a man's job. Like Macnamara in the song, Mr. Godfrey was leader of the band. " I remember the Jubilee of '87 ", he said sixty-two years afterwards. " The first tune we played was ' Only to see her face again ' "—and he sang it with all his old energy. Besides leading the Wills band and playing the euphonium, he ran the band that played on the Bristol City football ground. At Christmas the band used to play carols outside the houses of the management.

Other well-remembered personalities of those days were Albert Sage of the Beating Up Room—a very tall man who played cricket for the old Wills eleven, and John Still, known at one time as the " Foreman of the Horse "—the horse

being that ridden by Mr. Melville Wills. John, who drove the horse cart in the days when one driver was employed to make all the local deliveries, later became foreman of the transport garage. When motoring came in he learnt to drive lorries, and he taught many members of the staff to drive their first cars.

Among the women employees was Florence Tucker, who started in the Beating Up Room at Redcliff Street in 1883 when Mr. Barter was manager and Mr. John Melville foreman. She began by carrying paper wrappers to the girls, who worked in groups of three. The girls wore white aprons. Two lads opened the tins of tobacco for them. " It was a very happy time ", she said. " There was a big checkboard at the door in Redcliff Street. You took off the check and went up to your room. Mr. Bendall looked after the checkboard ".

The name of Clara Sweet is one that evokes affectionate memories. When she retired in 1922 as Forewoman of the Packing Department, little Mrs. Sweet had been with the firm fifty years. She left at one time to get married but returned later when her husband died. Mrs. Sweet died in 1943 at the age of ninety-six.

There have been many remarkable records of long service. In 1944 it was calculated at the London House that five generations of the Hancock family had given an aggregate service of 139 years and that the Vardy family, comprising four generations, had contributed 132 years' service. The Ogborne family of Bristol had achieved over 340 years' service by 1951, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Ogborne, senior, and their descendants accounting for 218 years of that total.

In March 1950 there were 164 employees (including staff) in the various Wills factories who had given forty-two years' service or more.

Compared with today, the Bedminster staff in 1892 seems very small:—

In charge of Factory	Mr. George A. Wills
In charge of Staff and Sales	Mr. W. Melville Wills
Private Offices	5
Counting House	9
Invoice Office	8
Wages and Stores	2
In charge of Rolls and Capstan	2
In charge of Cigar Room	1
In charge of Beating Up Room	1
Outside Representatives	11

The three senior travellers in that year were T. H. Cundy, H. Nicholls and John Furness. Others who represented Wills on the road in various parts of the United Kingdom were Messrs. W. H. Bryant, Charles Farr, J. R. Gummer, B. C. Lambert, A. E. Trenerry, F. H. Fleming, W. V. Rayner, W. Downing, H. E. Johnson, and G. H. Johnson.

When Mr. G. H. Johnson retired in 1934 he was senior traveller for the London House. At a farewell gathering he said, " I can very clearly recall my interview with Mr. Frederick Wills—a very fine gentleman. When he had sized me up he

looked at me and was very uncertain whether he ought to engage me. He said, ' You are very small ', and then said, ' Do you want to come ? ' I said, ' If you please, sir ', and he took me on—fortunately for me. It was the best day's work I ever did ". Mr. Johnson continued: " I was so small that I had to use a three-tiered stool placed next to Mr. Vardy, senior. I used to climb on it and enter up cheques that came along. I had to climb on it as it was impossible for me to get on to it otherwise ".

At a dinner held in Birmingham in January 1937 to mark the retirement of two travellers—Messrs. F. H. Fleming and M. Wells—Mr. Fleming recalled his early days on the road. When he started travelling at the age of nineteen in the early eighteen-nineties, the travellers wore frock coats and silk hats and were supplied with visiting cards printed with their own name and that of the firm. Mr. Fleming covered Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire by foot, train and cab. (In 1951 there were twelve representatives in that area). In the north of England at that time the only Wills cigarettes sold in any quantity were Three Castles Hand-Made 20s. Mr. Fleming recalled the excitement he had when obtaining his first order for 25,000 Woodbines—in Bradford.

Speaking of the courtesy of the road in those days, Mr. Fleming described the procedure in the old Commercial Room when the first arrival at the hotel became President of the Table and new arrivals had to obtain permission to join the gathering. Anyone found smoking in the Commercial Room before nine in the evening was fined a bottle of wine.

Other members of the staff in 1892 included Messrs. J. Fairclough, W. Barter, R. J. Burch, E. J. G. Comerford, W. Ball, H. A. Hancock, W. J. Bretherton, L. J. Morley, J. F. Gold, W. M. Davies, F. J. Schwalm, W. E. Shearn, H. F. Singer, and A. E. Wells. Mr. Singer, who became Manager of the London House when Mr. J. F. Gold retired, joined the staff at Holborn Viaduct in the early 'nineties. He was a ledger keeper with very wide powers. He also looked after the export side of the trade. In due course he was called upon to take charge of the office staff and the accounts of the House. His heart was in his work—a fact well illustrated by a story told by Mr. C. E. Timperley at a farewell dinner to Mr. Singer in 1932. " I well remember playing a game of golf with him some years ago ", said Mr. Timperley. " We had a ding-dong game and were level right up to the seventeenth hole. I had then, I recall, a three-foot putt, and I looked at the lie of the ball, knelt down to see the level of the ground, and took my stance. I was about to hit the ball when ' H.S.' came closer and said to me, ' Timperley, what do you think of the chances of Bramble Roll ? ' "

Mr. R. J. Burch joined the Bedminster staff in 1888 as a senior clerk in the Invoice Office, of which he later became head. On his first day he wore a top hat to the office—a choice of headgear that aroused so much comment that next day he wore a cap. For a time Mr. Burch took charge of the transport business, and it was through his efforts that the rates for bulk deliveries were reduced. During

the first World War Mr. Burch was on holiday at Blackpool when he had a telegram requesting him to come back and take charge of the whole of the Bedminster factory, with the exception of the cigarette section. Later he was appointed manager of the Redcliff Street factory. In 1924, at the age of fifty-six, he became manager of the factory in Dublin, where armoured cars were still patrolling the streets. " We occupied converted stables ", he said. " The loose boxes were our offices ". Mr. Burch, who took a keen interest in the Athletic Club in Dublin, retired in 1928.

During the period of great expansion in the 'nineties a number of additions were made to the management. Among those appointed were Mr. Hugo Cunliffe-Owen, Mr. W. Rennie, and Mr. Reginald Earle. Mr. Cunliffe-Owen (later Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen, Bt.) joined the firm as assistant to Mr. H. H. Wills at the Victoria Cavendish Works, which was originally at Baldwin Street but was moved to Redcliff Street in 1897. On the formation of the British-American Tobacco Company in 1902 the Virginia Cavendish Works passed into the hands of the new Company, of which Mr. Cunliffe-Owen was appointed a director and the first Secretary. He became Chairman of the B.A.T. in 1923, and President of the company in 1945. Mr. H. H. Wills, who with Mr. W. B. Ogden was the first joint Deputy Chairman of the B.A.T., married Mr. Cunliffe-Owen's sister, who later became Dame Monica Wills and whose name is perpetuated in the St. Monica Home of Rest, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol. Mr. Rennie, who had been trained as a barrister and was the grandson of Sir John Rennie, the engineer who designed the old Waterloo Bridge, joined W. D. & H. O. Wills in 1896. In 1912 he relinquished the post of manager of the London House to succeed Mr. Melville Wills as a member of the Bristol House. On the death of Mr. E. H. M. Gunn in 1916 Mr. Rennie took over the management of the Wills Branch. Appointed a Director of the I.T.Co. in April 1912, he became a member of the Executive in December 1925. He resigned from the Board in October 1936, after 40 years' service with Wills and the Imperial Tobacco Company.

Mr. Earle, a civil engineer, joined the firm in 1898 as assistant to Mr. H. H. Wills. In 1902 he became Chief Engineer of the Imperial Tobacco Company, and in 1912 was appointed a member of the Board. He resigned his position as Chief Engineer of the Company in 1925. He was a member of the Executive Committee from 1924 to 1935, finally resigning from the Board in January 1943.

Mr. Henry Wills Gunn, Mr. Ernest Mayo Gunn and Mr. J. Hamilton Gunn all entered the firm in the 'nineties. They were the sons of the Rev. H. Mayo Gunn and his wife Isabella, the second child and elder daughter of H. O. Wills the Second. Mr. H. W. Gunn was the father of Mr. Henry Somerville Gunn; Mr. E. H. M. Gunn was the father of Mr. Henry Mayo Gunn and Mr. William Inghram Gunn.

Mr. H. W. Gunn was trained with a firm of accountants and had been a junior partner in a great mercantile house in the Far East until persistent tropical illness

forced him to retire. Several years' fruit farming in Worcestershire helped to restore his health, and he joined W. D. & H. O. Wills in 1897, when he was 44. He was appointed secretary to the firm in 1899, and became the first secretary of the Imperial Tobacco Company on its formation in 1901.

His brother Mr. E. H. Mayo Gunn, who took over the management of the London House in 1897 on the death of Mr. James Jollyman, had previously been manager of the *St. James's Gazette.* A man of considerable business acumen, he assumed many responsibilities when Mr. Arthur Wills was absent from the London House on account of ill-health. In 1900 Mr. E. H. M. Gunn came down to Bristol to manage the Bedminster factory, with Mr. H. B. Marshall to assist him.

Mr. J. Hamilton Gunn became manager of the Redcliff Street factory. He was only in his early forties when he died in October 1901.

The arrival of the Gunns at Wills has been vividly described by a former employee in these words: " I can well remember the day when Mr. George Wills and Mr. H. B. Marshall on their daily round of inspection were accompanied by two other gentlemen. One was short and red-faced, with a bristly moustache, flashing eyes and a huge neck—the other a very tall, slender man. They turned out to be ' Mr. Mayo ' and Mr. H. W. Gunn. All sorts of rumours went round the factory about what was going to happen in the way of reorganisation. I must say that Mr. Mayo had a tremendous voice—indeed it was a roar—but in spite of this he was a most kindly man ". The pensioner who wrote this description also said, " The governors in those days started to wear special hats. Mr. Marshall's was brown and Mr. George Wills's was black. These hats reminded me of parsons' hats. They had firm brims and soft silk centres ".

Many familiar names are contained in the list of factory employees in 1899. There was John Bodinnar, whose working life was spent first with the Wills family and firm and later with the Imperial Tobacco Co. where, as head of the household staff, he was for many years a familiar figure to the Bristol members of the Company and to all visitors to Head Office from the home and overseas Branches of the Company.

A man of strong character, shrewd judgment, and keen humour, John Bodinnar was exceptionally qualified to be happy in human relationships. When he died in 1946, in his ninety-second year, many directors of the Company and senior members of the management were among those who attended the burial of their old friend.

Tom Setter, who began work in the Fitting Shop under the supervision of Mr. H. H. Wills, was sent to South Africa during the last year of the Boer War to overhaul and re-erect machinery in the factory at Johannesburg. The Boers, commandeering the factory and attempting to run it, had spoiled most of the machines. Tom had almost finished the repairs when, standing in the Wanderers' ground at Johannesburg, he heard peace proclaimed. He returned to England in the ship in which the Peace Treaty was brought back. No sooner was he back in England

than Tom was sent to China, where he spent nearly a year erecting and overhauling machines in Shanghai.

During this time the Imperial Tobacco Company was formed. Tom's first job on returning to England was to supervise and assist in the erection of machines in the Company's factories in London and Glasgow. When he had completed these duties he re-started work at what is now No. 1 Factory at Bedminster. Later he was transferred to No. 3 Factory, Raleigh Road, where he remained until he retired in 1924.

Another employee who helped Mr. H. H. Wills in engineering matters was T. G. Hazelwood. Tom Hazelwood, who became Foreman of the Soldering Department, joined the firm in 1884, working at the Export Branch in Baldwin Street when Mr. Harry Wills was the head.

Among the outstanding foremen at the end of the century were William Bale, Elijah Constable, John Melville, A. Pople, A. E. Marshall, William Alvis, Sidney Veale, Frank Chappell, and Jack Walden. Other employees included Ellen Daniels, Emily Harris, Bob Loxton, E. H. Cantle and George Lewis.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BEFORE THE INVASION

THE turn of the century, marked by such national events as Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, the Boer War, and the accession of Edward VII in 1901, also brought great changes to the House of Wills.

The firm had come a long way in the hundred years that had elapsed since the first H. O. Wills set up in business in the little shop in Castle Street. The last ten years of the nineteenth century in particular were years of steady progress and expansion.

The success of the new Bedminster factory, and its increasing output, enabled the firm to develop its home business still further and to establish a growing export trade. It was during this period that the annual holidays with pay, the bonuses and the weekly tobacco allowances for adult male employees were introduced. The prosperity of the firm meant prosperity for everybody. Even the tobacco duty of 3/2d in the pound, bringing £9,533,888 to the Exchequer in 1892, was a nuisance to be accepted good-humouredly.

The fumes of anti-smoking propagandists writing letters to the Press against the tobacco habit were equalled only by the fumes rising from the bowls of contented smokers. There were still pipes to be filled as well as cigarettes to be extracted from paper packets. When 5,000 labourers were working on a narrow gauge of the Great Western Railway below Exeter in 1892, the firm presented each man with two ounces of Westward Ho ! (A year later the firm began packing this popular brand in half-ounce square packets instead of the round ones formerly used. In 1901, when the Imperial Tobacco Company was formed, Westward Ho ! was the best-selling pipe tobacco of the Company's products, followed by Capstan Navy Cut.) In 1892 the firm opened offices in Birmingham and Manchester.

A document, now yellow with age, enumerates the duties of foremen in 1892. Among these duties are the following:

" To see that no overtime is worked unless absolutely necessary.

" To report in writing to the Manager on the 1st of the month the amount of overtime worked in the department during the preceding month.

" To report all cases of accident or infectious disease at once to the Private Secretary of the firm, and cases of illness of women and girls to the Matron.

" To report to the Matron in the case of women or girls, and to the Manager as regards men and boys, any cases of distress or poverty arising in a family through the absence of a worker from illness, that may come under their notice ".

The first big event of the 'nineties was on May 20th 1893, when the firm became a limited liability company—W. D. & H. O. Wills Ltd.—with a capital of £1,500,000. Those present at the first Board meeting of the new company on June 26th 1893 included William Henry Wills (who was made a Baronet in the same year), H. O. Wills the Third, Edward Payson Wills, Frederick Wills, George A. Wills, H. H. Wills, W. Melville Wills, Edward Chaning Wills and A. J. Hamilton Wills. Mr. Ernest Salter Wills became a director in 1895. The solicitor was Mr. James Inskip, and Mr. Fred Palmer was the first secretary.

The Articles of Association show that rules and regulations applied to the heads of the firm quite as much as to the employees. Here is an extract:—

" Every Managing Director shall be required to possess a practical knowledge of the business of the Company, or some important department thereof, and shall devote all his time and attention (except reasonable holidays and relaxation) to the efficient management of his department or departments of the business of the Company, until he shall have served the firm of W. D. & H. O. Wills and the Company, or the Company alone, as a Managing Partner or a Managing Director, or both, for a period of ten years, after which term of years he shall devote sufficient time and attention as shall be necessary to manage his department or departments in a thoroughly efficient manner: Provided that the Board may at any time sanction any modification of this requirement in favour of any Managing Director: Provided always that no Managing Director shall be engaged in any other business or profession ".

In 1893 the firm was awarded a Diploma at the Bristol Exhibition. This Exhibition, held on the site of " Magpie Park ", was attended by more than half a million people. Every day for four months crowds gathered round the Wills Stand in the Industrial Hall to see the tobacco packing machine which was the joint patent of Mr. H. H. Wills and Mr. W. Rose.

As the century drew to its close, the welfare and recreational side of the firm's activities was increasingly extended. In 1893 the W. D. & H. O. Wills Ltd. Association Football Club was formed, with J. Walden as chairman and R. Mann as secretary. In the same year Walter Kidner was running a singing class of 150 women, boys and girls. Two years later the Girls' Sick Club was started, with 1,400 members. By this time the firm had a factory doctor—Dr. H. W. Windsor Aubrey. When he visited the factory the girls paid a penny each towards the cost of medicines. A factory doctor in the 'nineties, many years before the coming of National Health Insurance, had to do a considerable amount of dispensing, visiting, examining and First Aid. There are many who remember the

conscientious and kindly way in which Dr. Aubrey looked after the employees' health. At first he attended only the Bedminster and Redcliff Street factories, but later he became Medical Officer to No. 3 Factory and Messrs. Franklyn, Davey & Co. During the First World War he served with the Forces and was in charge of a large prisoner-of-war camp in Malta. After the war he returned to Wills, where he continued his work as factory doctor until his retirement in 1929.

Sick pay was a frequent subject of discussion at Board meetings during the last two or three years of the century. To help male employees who were members of Benefit Societies, the Board had long given the managing directors power to supplement club money, when it was thought fit to do so, to the full amount of the ordinary wage. At a meeting in December 1899 the Board made this further decision about men and boys who were insured against illness:

> " They shall be allowed by the Company a sum equal to the weekly sum allowed by the insuring Club: provided that both sums do not exceed three-quarters of the weekly wage of the workman in question; also provided that after a man has been in our employ continuously for twenty years the limit of three-quarters shall be extended to the whole of the wage. Foremen and forewomen may have their full wage made up in any case ".

It was pointed out that the resolution was not to establish a permanent arrangement between the company and its workmen but to guide managing directors. Any supplementary money paid to sick workpeople was, as before, a gift from the Board.

Other aspects of welfare included the formation of an ambulance brigade in 1898 and the growth of activities already established. By 1897 the library had 1,100 books and a circulation of 400 a week. During this year the Convalescent Home assisted 104 women and girls, and 115 in 1899. The firm's football, cricket and tennis clubs were all flourishing. Cricket matches were played against teams at Blagdon, Clevedon and Badminton, the Wills eleven having an adventurous drive back from the Duke of Beaufort's estate at Badminton on one occasion in a coach and four. A lacrosse club was started in 1901.

Few virtues ranked higher with the Victorians than thrift, and the heads of the firm were zealous in training others to practise those habits of economy that had helped to build the House of Wills. By 1899 the Savings Bank had 1,074 depositors. The bonus, instituted by the Directors to give their employees a personal stake in the prosperity of the firm and to give them a chance of providing for their own future, rose from 2/3d in the pound in 1889 to 7/4¾d in 1898. As there were still some employees who were not taking advantage of the opportunity to save, the directors in 1899 drew up a scheme which, though not altering the basis on which the bonus was calculated, ensured that in normal circumstances a

third of the bonus would be held in trust for the employee till a later date—when, for example, he attained the age of sixty.

The daily round of factory life in the 'nineties was enlivened by visits from several distinguished people: King Khama of Bechuanaland in 1895 and the American Ambassador (the Hon. T. F. Bayard) at the end of the following year. Mr. Bayard, who was shown George Washington's letter, presented the firm with an old portrait of Washington by Gilbert Stuart. In 1900 the Chinese Minister, Sir Chihihen Lofengluh, visited the factory. At this time Wills were selling enormous quantities of cigarettes in North China.

Wills won further diplomas at the Canadian Exhibition in 1895, and at Brussels in 1897. Meanwhile the firm continued to expand, both at home and abroad. In the London House many changes took place. In 1894, a year after the absorption of Sales, Pollard and Co., the London offices were fitted with electric light and, amid general rejoicing, the moulding machines were moved down to the basement from what later became the accountant's office. Formerly the four machines, driven by a donkey engine, caused such a clatter and rattle that the firm of solicitors next door complained regularly; and the Wills cashier, who sat on the first floor immediately underneath the machines, worked in perpetual fear of the ceiling collapsing on top of him.

One of the problems that Mr. E. H. M. Gunn had to face when he became manager of the London House was how to provide more floor space for an expanding business. A solution was found by taking over four floors of No. 33 Snow Hill. In September 1899 the whole of these premises was converted into a warehouse. A wooden stairway with a ramp for hauling cases was bridged across the alleyway running into Farringdon Street between the Holborn Viaduct and Snow Hill premises. In 1900 it was decided to discontinue the manufacture of tobacco at the London House and the machinery was transferred to Bristol. The space thus left at the London House was soon taken up for packing and storing, and on the top floor of No. 53 the old book room was formed and the canteen and tea room opened. (At one time, before a proper kitchen was built, employees had their tea in the Stores Advertising Department).

When the Imperial Tobacco Company was formed the Wills London House had sixty staff and sixty warehouse employees. Much progress had been made since the early days in Long Acre. The travelling staff had grown from three to thirteen; and there had been expansions in the Day Book Department, the Cash Sales Department, the Counter Trade Department, and the Dissections Department, begun at Mr. Melville Wills's suggestion in 1892. Pencil and carbon papers were still used in the Invoice Office: it was not until 1912 that the London House installed typing machines with specially constructed tables to take the invoice books.

In Bristol, as in other cities, the years 1897-1901 vibrated with patriotic feeling, beginning with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (in celebration of which the Bedminster factory glittered with coloured electric lights), continuing with the outbreak of the Boer War, and culminating in the accession of Edward VII in 1901.

Many of the firm's employees were among those who enlisted in the Army in 1899, marching away from the barracks to the sound of cheers from the citizens and the martial airs of the band, with the sun glistening on the long line of magnificent chestnut horses ridden by the artillery. Wives of Wills employees serving in South Africa were granted ten shillings a week by the firm. In the first year of the war the firm sent out 500,000 cigarettes to the wounded; in the following year the troops received £2,000 worth of tobacco.

Wills advertising at the time of the Boer War took the form of brass medallions of the British generals, a descriptive brochure, and the *Transvaal* series of cigarette cards mentioned in an earlier chapter.

The closing years of the century were marked by several outstanding events in the history of the firm. In 1897 Mr. Frederick Wills received his Baronetcy; in 1898 Mr. H. H. Wills paid a visit to Australia which led to the formation of W. D. & H. O. Wills (Australia) Ltd. in 1900; in 1898, too, Gold Flake conical cigarettes were introduced in the United Kingdom at 4d for a tin of ten; in 1899 Mr. G. A. Wills was appointed Sheriff of Bristol, Mr. E. P. Wills was knighted, and the factory was closed for a day in celebration of Queen Victoria's visit to Bristol to open the Convalescent Home on Durdham Down; in 1900 the firm's export branch was moved to a new factory at Ashton Gate.

This factory, built at a cost of £100,000 on the site of the old Bedminster cricket ground, gave the firm's export trade more capacity than it had had either in Redcliff Street or Baldwin Street. A Press article of the time, describing the layout of the new factory, drew attention to the patent air-tight tins and to the Bonsack cigarette machines that had helped to make W. D. & H. O. Wills the largest tobacco and cigarette manufacturers in the United Kingdom. The article also commented on an ingenious device called the "crimper", which folded and pressed the edges of the cigarette envelope together. Beneath the ground floor of the factory was a roadway running right round the building. Considerable space had been allocated to the Stock Room, where cases were stored preparatory to being shipped abroad to such places as South Africa, the Gold Coast, the West Indies, Shanghai and Hongkong, Calcutta, Ceylon, Australia and New Zealand, France and Italy, and the United States.

The opening of the Ashton Gate factory, which brought the total of Wills workpeople to nearly 4,000, was a justifiably optimistic reply to those people who were afraid that Great Britain was losing her foreign trade. At the firm's annual staff dinner in 1900 Sir William Henry Wills said there were still some places where

Wills tobacco was unknown. Perhaps he was thinking of the remote regions mentioned in a limerick which he recited:—

There was an old maid of Malacca
Who smoked such atrocious tobacco
Lions trembled with fear
Whene'er they drew near
And tigers refused to attack her.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE FORMATION OF THE IMPERIAL TOBACCO COMPANY AND 50 YEARS AFTER

WHILE the war was being carried to a successful conclusion in South Africa, business men at Bedminster stopped one another in the corridors to exchange the latest rumours of an " invasion ". To the present generation this word evokes memories of 1940, when the buzz of enemy aircraft coincided with a buzz of chatter about Hitler's armies assembled on the coasts of France for a massed assault on England. But at the beginning of the century people meant something quite different when they spoke of invasion. The term was associated not with a military enemy but with a powerful American combine intent on capturing the tobacco trade of Great Britain.

In 1890 several of the larger companies manufacturing tobacco and cigarettes in the United States had amalgamated to form the American Tobacco Company, with James Buchanan Duke as president. John K. Winkler, who tells the full story of Duke's life in *Tobacco Tycoon*, suggests that in founding the American Tobacco Company and dominating the tobacco industry in America Duke changed the smoking habits of a nation. This man, who became as outstanding a figure in the American tobacco industry as Rockfeller was in oil and Carnegie in steel, was raised in the pine woods and sandhills of North Carolina. As a boy he learned the art of good trading by trekking through the countryside in a covered wagon with his father, an independent farmer from the South. Young Duke also helped his father on his tiny tobacco farm.

A glimpse of the shrewd character developed by those early experiences is also given in Joseph C. Robert's *The Story of Tobacco in America* and in Gilbert Frankau's *Self-Portrait*. Mr. Frankau describes Duke as " a huge, shambling figure with a florid clean-shaven face, dressed carelessly and wearing a curious pair of black-laced boots ". The author records this interesting conversation-piece:

" Duke said, ' There are only three things you ought to know in business. The first's men '.

" He paused.

" ' And the second ? ' I asked.

" ' Men ', he said smiling. ' And the third's men too ' ".

Mr. Frankau also recalls that when Duke was in difficulties through inability to sell a large stock of hand-made cigarettes the inventor Bonsack went to see him

and said, " If you make them on my machine instead of by hand you can go on selling them at the same price for a good profit ". Duke accepted the offer, and the Bonsack machines were of the greatest value in the foundation of the American Tobacco Company.

This gigantic concern, with its disclosed income of £4,000,000 soon developed a considerable export trade in addition to its large home business. Depots were established in England for the distribution of its products. But there was one great obstacle to the extension of its British trade. In the United Kingdom a higher rate of duty was levied on imported manufactured tobaccco products than on unmanufactured tobacco so that the American brands were dearer than the British brands. In order to overcome this difficulty the Americans decided to acquire a factory in England and manufacture there.

The threat to the British tobacco industry was serious. The American Tobacco Company had vast financial resources, and Mr. Duke let it be known that the American Tobacco Company " had set aside for the active business efforts they intended to make of capturing the English and European trade a sum of £6,000,000 ".

Within a fortnight of his arrival in this country, in September 1901, he had purchased Ogden's of Liverpool. Next he went to Nottingham with the intention of acquiring the Player business—but this time he met with refusal, and while he was considering his next move the initiative passed from his hands.

On the 19th September 1901 thirteen of the leading British manufacturers met to discuss the position and decided to present a united front to the invaders by amalgamating. At the meeting, which was held in Birmingham, W. D. & H. O. Wills were represented by the three Bristol managing directors, Mr. G. A. Wills, Mr. H. H. Wills and Mr. W. Melville Wills, together with Mr. E. H. M. Gunn and Mr. H. W. Gunn, who acted as secretary to the meeting. They were accompanied by Mr. James Inskip, the firm's solicitor, and Mr. Fred Jenkins, who for many years had been the firm's auditor.

A provisional agreement to form a joint company was reached on October 3rd 1901, and on the 15th October the following circular was dispatched to all customers of the thirteen manufacturers concerned.

> " We are glad to be able to inform you that we have agreed upon an amalgamation of our business under the name of The Imperial Tobacco Company (of Great Britain & Ireland), Limited, and we wish our customers to be assured that if they remain loyal to British Commerce we shall stand by them, and that in the arrangements which are now being made for carrying out the amalgamation the interests of the Retail Trade will be carefully borne in mind ".

By the 30th October the agreement to unite was ratified by the thirteen companies, and the Imperial Tobacco Company was incorporated on 10th December 1901. The first meeting of the Board of Directors took place on December

11th and 12th, with Sir William Henry Wills as chairman. Seven of the nineteen original directors of the Company were members of the Wills family. In addition to the Chairman, they were:
Mr. Henry Overton Wills, Sir Edward Payson Wills, K.C.B., Sir Frederick Wills, Bt., M.P., Mr. George Alfred Wills, Mr. Henry Herbert Wills and Mr. Walter Melville Wills. The names of Mr. E. Chaning Wills and Mr. A. J. Hamilton Wills were added to the list of Directors at the first Board Meeting, and Mr. James Inskip (father of Sir John Inskip and the late Viscount Caldecote, who became successively Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice of England) was appointed Solicitor to the Company.

Early in 1902 a small staff of employees from various of the Imperial Company's Branches were installed in a suite of office accommodation on the Lombard Street side of Wills's Bedminster factory. This was the nucleus of the Company's Head Office, set up to co-ordinate the administration of the Branches. (The present Head Office building in Lombard Street, adjoining the Wills Branch was designed by Sir Frank Wills & Sons, and was opened in 1909).

The first Secretary of the Company was Mr. H. W. Gunn, formerly Secretary of W. D. & H. O. Wills. Mr. Farren Lambert was transferred from the Virginia Cavendish Works staff to assist him. Mr. F. H. Thorpe, who had been at school with Mr. G. A. Wills, was appointed first Chief Accountant. Mr. James Inskip, previously Solicitor to W. D. & H. O. Wills, became the Company's Solicitor, with Mr. G. A. Falk as his assistant. Mr. C. S. Clarke of the William Clarke & Son Branch was transferred from Liverpool to become the Company's Leaf Manager. Mr. Reginald Earle, who had been an assistant to Mr. H. H. Wills, was appointed Chief Engineer. Mr. G. N. Pike and Mr. F. W. Jollyman, who became the first head of the Company's Research Department, were among members of the Wills staff transferred to Head Office.

By the summer of 1902 four more firms had joined the Imperial Company, whose fighting power was steadily increasing. In the opposite camp the Americans had succeeded in increasing Ogden's turnover—but only at extravagant cost, resulting in the Ogden business being carried on at a considerable loss. By cutting prices the Americans tried to force the British firms into an uneconomic price-cutting war. But the Imperial Branches stood firmly by their old, fair prices—fully supported by both British retailers and British public, who were quick to realise that the low prices of the Ogden goods would go up overnight if the Americans obtained sole control of the English market.

This was Duke's first major setback. The second came when he learned that the Imperial Tobacco Company were, as a retaliatory measure, planning to carry the war into his own country—to set up a spearhead of attack in the United States, and sell their goods over there in competition with those of the American Tobacco Company.

The end came quickly after that. In September 1902 the American Tobacco

Company agreed to sell the Ogden business to the Imperial Tobacco Company and to cease their activities in Great Britain and Ireland. The Imperial Tobacco Company were to have the trading rights in the United Kingdom for the American Tobacco Company's brands, and the American Tobacco Company were to have the trading rights in the United States for the Imperial Tobacco Company's brands. To meet the needs of the small but growing export trade a new company was formed under the name of British-American Tobacco Company, Limited, registered in England, to acquire the rights and the trade marks of both the older organisations for ships' stores and other business outside the United States and its territories and outside Great Britain and Ireland.

The export and duty-free ships' stores trade of W. D. & H. O. Wills and the other Imperial Branches was sold to the new company. Wills, in addition to the export trade which they carried on through agents in various parts of the world, had their own factory in Shanghai and had also begun to manufacture in Australia. The whole of this export business, together with the Export Factory at Ashton Gate, was taken over by the British-American Tobacco Company. Mr. H. H. Wills was appointed a Deputy Chairman and Mr. Hugo Cunliffe-Owen Secretary of the new company. Some of the Wills employees who had been engaged on the export side of the business were also transferred to the B.A.T. A number of these employees returned to Wills in 1919 when the British-American Tobacco Company moved from Bristol to Liverpool and the Ashton Gate factory became once more a Wills factory.

When the Imperial Tobacco Company was formed, Wills and the other tobacco manufacturing firms that joined ceased to be separate legal entities and became Branches of the Company. But their separate trading identities were maintained. They continued to trade under their old familiar names and in competition with each other, and each firm preserved its individuality and its own traditions.

And so W. D. & H. O. Wills, while playing its full part in the promotion and development of the Imperial Tobacco Company, has maintained its own great traditions and enhanced its reputation as one of the oldest and most famous Tobacco Houses.

The House of Wills has expanded enormously during the last fifty years. New factories, new warehouses, new machinery have all helped to increase production to a pitch far beyond the dreams of the Wills employees at the beginning of the century.

In 1886 the new Wills factory at East Street, Bedminster was considered the finest tobacco factory in the whole kingdom, and when at the opening celebrations it was said that the time might come when even this great factory would be inadequate for the firm's needs, the remark was regarded as more in keeping with the festive occasion than as a serious prophecy. But the prophecy has been more than fulfilled. The No. 1 Factory and headquarters of the firm remain at Bedminster

but they have far outgrown the original East Street premises, and the Bedminster block now includes, in addition to the greatly extended East Street Factory, the modern Regent Road Wing and the adjoining Branch Recreation Hall.

There are now additional factories at Ashton Gate, Bristol, and the firm also has factories in Swindon, Dublin, Newcastle upon Tyne and Glasgow, as well as offices and warehouses in London and Belfast.

There have been many memorable events within the Branch during the past half-century. The visits of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary to the Bedminster factory in 1917; of the Duke and Duchess of York—later to become King George the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth—in July 1928; of the Prince of Wales in November 1934; of Queen Mary and Mrs. Roosevelt during the Second World War; and of the present Queen (then Princess Elizabeth) in 1950; the opening of new factories and depots; the use of the Recreation Hall as a Rest Centre for bombed-out Bristolians and refugees from Gibraltar in the grim days and nights of 1940. These are some of the spectacular incidents.

But a great business firm does not depend for its survival and prosperity merely on the spectacular side of life any more than a man can depend for his sustenance on an everlasting diet of oysters and champagne. Many of the most characteristic happenings in the Wills Branch in the last fifty years have been quiet and unspectacular phases in a gradual evolution rather than vivid, arresting events, and it is in the day-to-day routine of office and factory that the soundness of the Wills organisation is most apparent to those who value efficiency and quality in industry.

The smoothness with which the business is run is due not only to the wise decisions of its leaders and the loyal co-operation of the employees during the past fifty years, important though these have been. Part, at any rate, of the firm's success is the heritage of its history. Across the pages of that history flit the shadows of the original H. O. Wills and his little workshop in Castle Street; of Tom Long and Luke Thomas; of Clara Sweet, coming to the factory at the age of thirteen and retiring half a century later; of Sam Prew, the foreman; of the clear-sighted men who met in Birmingham to combat Mr. James Buchanan Duke; of the ageing but spirited Lord Winterstoke standing on the platform at Yatton station with his coat collar muffled round his neck, waiting patiently for the last train to Blagdon after a meeting of the Board of the great Company he had helped to form. They were characters, every one of them, united by their devotion to Wills of Bristol.

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